

GURDJIEFF

his work

on myself...

with others...

for the work



IRMIS B. POPOFF

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FOREWORD

Shortly before he died, Pyotr D. Ouspensky told pupils who were at his side that he was abandoning the "System" he had taught them and others; that each one was to forget everything in the manner in which he had heard it and then try to reconstruct it all as he understood it personally, starting from the very beginning.

These words were not spoken within my hearing. This took place in London, after Mr. Ouspensky had left New York, sometime before he came to the point in his life circle where death claimed him.

I first learned of them by mail. A close friend was among those who went with him from New York to London on his return journey. She spoke in her letter of the general dismay prevailing among our people in England as a result of Mr. Ouspensky's statement and said that he had been asked to reconsider, to explain how it would be possible for them to forget and to live without something that had become an integral part of their being, but he had merely answered:

"The System is greater than any man."

It was long after the dawn, which heralded the glorious coming of Mr. Gurdjieff's day in New York, began to disperse the night in which I and those who were in my group at Mr. Ouspensky's departure were engulfed, that Rodney Collins, present among the close pupils who were in London at our teacher's death, wrote his book *The Theory of Celestial Influence* in which he, too, speaking of the change in being that Mr. Ouspensky had attained, mentions that he had urged all of them to reconstruct their understanding of the Work.

Kenneth Walker's book, *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching*, came much later. Here, without referring to the words that I have mentioned, he also gives many of the diagrams and some of the material which had by now appeared in Mr. Ouspensky's posthumous book, *In Search of the Miraculous*.

It was while discussing this book of Walker's with young persons in the Work, who never knew either of the two "great old men," that my attention was arrested by their statement that "it seems nonsensical to repeat in different words what Mr. Ouspensky has said already, without adding anything new to what has been told to us." I said aloud, less to them than to myself, "There can be but one version of the ideas. Each one reiterates what he heard according to what he made his own. It is all that matters to oneself, at any event."

It was then that I recalled that Mr. Ouspensky, just recently arrived in New York in 1941, gave me as one of my very first tasks to write for him a Résumé of what I thought that I had heard at his lectures. I had heard them repeated thrice. His book, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, had not yet been published; we had no books at the time concerning the System, for they did not see the light until after Mr. Ouspensky's death.

I had written my report for him. In it I repeated all that I thought I had heard and memorized from the lectures in the manner in which I had understood it. Sometime later, when he returned my papers to me, Mr. Ouspensky said, "This is yours."

It was a simple statement. I never gave it any thought until the time of which I have just spoken, when I was discussing Kenneth Walker's book with some of our young people.

Now I understood his words differently. I did not have to struggle with my imagination to realize that Mr. Ouspensky's statement remained as simple as he had made it. But I understood it differently, that is all. And then, through association, another incident came to my mind—this time involving the Master Magician, the beloved Mr. Gurdjieff himself.

I had come to Childs' at 57th Street and Fifth Avenue early one morning during his last visit to New York, hoping to see him alone. Faithful to an old custom, it was at Childs' that he held "office" every morning at breakfast time. He came into the restaurant shortly after my arrival, and my wish was granted. No one else had come in as yet. He saw me, and motioned for me to sit at his table. I sat by him.

On the previous evening at the Movements he had told us that we must think about all that we were receiving, that we must ask ourselves how much we valued it, what we would sacrifice

for it, in what way we could pay for it. And my wish was keen to show my deep appreciation of the Work in some way, so that this question was uppermost in my mind when he asked me, "What is your question?"

"How does one pay for what one receives?" I asked.

He looked at me. His look was long, integrating. This, too, I was grateful to receive. Then he said, "Is this your question? The answer is in my book."

"But I cannot buy your book," I told him. "I don't have that kind of money."

Subscriptions had gone out a few days before for \$500.00 from each person to defray the cost of publication of *All and Everything*.

Mr. Gurdjieff smiled, head dropped to one side in the inimitable way in which he alone could smile. It would be useless to try to describe his smile. Only those who knew and loved him know what his smile was like when kindly. Then he announced grandly, "I will give it to you. In what language, please?"

"English," I answered.

"Write your name here," he said giving me a napkin on which I wrote my name and address as other persons began to arrive.

Time passed. Days unbelievably rich in experience for me; in the opening of new horizons, in work and thinking and efforts, and loss of sleep that left me still stronger and with more energy than I ever knew I had, going on and on, living in full, intent on wasting no moment to be near Mr. Gurdjieff whether I could or could not spare the time, until the day came when he was to depart for France.

It was not long after Mr. Gurdjieff's return to Paris that Mr. Bissing phoned me to say that word had been received from him ordering me to translate *In Search of the Miraculous* into Spanish; but that it had to be done in exactly three months as Mr. Gurdjieff expected to return to New York in the Fall. Could I do it?—wondered Mr. Bissing.

My translation work began. I had promised to do it, and nothing against which I could struggle would stop me. However, nothing untoward happened to delay me, and my efforts reached a fruitful end within the three months allotted time. I came to know the contents of this book in the very marrow of my bones. It

gave me the intangible gift of its wealth of ideas as I contended with myself to understand the full meaning of the words that I read, the vast scope of the concepts they embodied.

During this entire period I pondered nothing except these thoughts. I worked at my translation; I neither ate nor slept nor lived as it was my ordinary wont to do. And in this manner Mr. Gurdjieff kept his word and gave his Work to me. He provided this opportunity for me to make a supereffort in preparing my translation. Once I had understood, for myself, what had been written, once I had lived with it, slept with it, traveled with it, eaten it, breathed it, carried it in mind and heart in a supereffort physically to beat time and to be ready for his arrival in October, as expected, there was nothing and no one to rob me of the key that I was holding to *All and Everything*.

This book came out sometime later at a price of \$5.00, well within my reach. Mr. Gurdjieff had kept his word to me. He had given me his book. And he gave much more than just his book: he gave me something precious that cannot possibly be bought with money—the energy that came from the work that I put into this task for which I paid in a supereffort of devotion.

I recall that the translation of *In Search of the Miraculous* into Spanish appeared a short time after Mr. Gurdjieff's death, published and translated in Buenos Aires. We were working at Amagansett at that time, and Peggy F. remarked, speaking with me about my translation, "I never saw anyone less identified with her own work."

Mr. Bissing further strengthened my essence feeling of gratitude by sending me a greeting card from Cyprus, a gesture of "understanding" in a situation that might fail to yield its treasure to me.

But I did not give a second thought to the fact that my translation had not been used. And no one could guess the reason for my apparent nonidentification; but I felt that I had received what I had been promised. Mr. Gurdjieff had kept his word. He had not said that my translation of his book would be published; he had merely said that he would "give" me of his work. And he did. How could I possibly dislodge the deep feeling of gratitude from my heart to become identified with anything at all, after having so steadily struggled, while translating, to understand the meaning and the evils of identification!

Now all this has come to my memory and I feel that, perhaps, my turn has come to reconstruct for myself what has become mine in the Work. That is, to "abandon" books and notes, everything that has been written, and to reiterate in my own way, from my own memory, my version of what I received. And I feel that the words of Mr. Ouspensky at his deathbed will serve as my authority to write the account of my personal Work experience.

This is, then, my subjective account of some phases of the work of these two great men, Mr. Ouspensky and his teacher Mr. Gurdjieff, as it affected me here in New York; a simple reiteration of facts of such tremendous importance in my life that I shall ever be at a loss for words to express their significance.

Through this reconstruction of my own experience I hope also to be living up to one of the principles of the Work according to which one must give from what one has in order to make room for more. I give from what I have received. It is necessarily a subjective account, an account that covers four phases of the Work in New York, with and after Mr. Ouspensky, with and after Mr. Gurdjieff—the great, the only, the beloved Mr. Gurdjieff.

There are times when I, like Kenneth Walker toward the end of his delightful book, *Venture with Ideas*, ask myself too whether "they will ever send another." But then I know that actually it does not matter. We were given a great deal, and must do much more with it before more can be received. As for myself, my aim is to awaken, to hope that it will be given me to remember much earlier, and that the Great Magician George Ivanitch Gurdjieff may once more be found on the side of the street which I have come to know so well; that the words to Ivan Osokin about the possibility of "not being there next time" shall not materialize as yet. Not until I have remembered.

IRMS BARRET POPOFF

"Ye shall know them by their fruit.
Do men gather grapes of thorns, or
figs of thistles?"
Matt. 7:15.

INTRODUCTION

March 1941.

Peter Demianovitch Ouspensky had just arrived in New York.

A reception was offered in his honor at Miss Scott's apartment and George Rubisov invited me. It was he who introduced me to the Work.

I had never heard of the guest of honor, nor did I know of the existence of his teacher, George Ivanitch Gurdjieff. But I was generally interested in lectures and in "systems of self-development." Moreover, a party was a party in those days and Rubisov had promised that there would be fun.

The gathering was large. The memory of the bizarre decorations still dazzles me.

Lionja Savitzky read that evening some notes taken from the writings that we came to know much later as the "Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution."

I was not particularly impressed, but when someone asked, "Mr. Ouspensky, do I understand correctly, you state that neither good nor evil are important in your System, that all man must do to develop is to remember himself?"

And after a short pause he answered, "It is correct. Good, evil, all relative. A man who remembers himself can become conscious. Conscious man is free, and may do as he wishes. It is all that is needed."

I protested, "But, Sir as Oscar Wilde says, 'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?'"

He was very near sighted. He adjusted his glasses on the tip of his nose and, scrutinizing me, he asked, "Beg pardon—who said?"

"Oscar Wilde," I repeated emphatically.

"Ahhhl!" He smiled, and turned his attention to someone else.

So did I.

Very late that evening, when I returned home I found a wire awaiting me. It read:

"MR. OUSPENSKY WILL SEE YOU AT HIS STUDIO AT 4 P.M. TOMORROW. M.S. Secretary."

"How odd!" I thought. "Now why on earth would this gentleman want to see me, of all people?"

Curiosity made me keep the appointment. I found him alone.

"Well. . . ?" he asked me as I sat by him.

"Well, I received your wire. A wire from Miss Seton."

He smiled as he told me, "Yes. You must read *New Testament*. All versions you can find. And next Tuesday, same time, you come to see me."

"*New Testament!* But what do you mean by *all* versions?" I asked.

"Greek, Catholic, King James—all versions you can find."

It was my turn to say, "O. . . h!" I had thought there was but one version.

After a while he dismissed me, saying, "Read, read. Then come back."

I did.

Starting with Matthew's Gospel, it was not long before I came to Chapter 16:XXVI: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

I had never noticed the quotes in Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Grey*. Jiminy! I thought, and I understood. Suddenly I felt a warm sensation of affection for the kindly old gentleman. What a quaint way to show me! I whispered to myself.

And I went back.

He began by forbidding me, who did not willingly take orders from anyone, to do certain things that I considered silly: ringing the bell more than once, sitting at a certain place, gesticulating when I spoke, and so on. But I tried to obey him, when I remembered.

He also outlined the reading that I must do in order to have questions for him, "Soon there will be readings of my lectures. There must be questions. It is very important," he assured me.

The lectures did begin shortly after this episode. I brought many friends to them, some as flighty-minded as myself. It was with a few of these, with some persons who had come from London, and with two or three others, that he formed after a while the small group that gathered semiprivately at his apart-

ment for quite some time besides attending meetings of the general group in which we also worked.

My narrative begins with this small group. This was the group that disbanded when Mr. Ouspensky died in London and Mr. Gurdjieff came to take us over into his flock. Some of the persons who had formed it left in order to join others who were no longer in the Work for the same reason: that they refused to recognize Mr. Gurdjieff. Three of us remained to wait and see:

One of them is now dead.

Another one eliminated herself.

The third one remains: it is I

IRMIS BARRET POPOFF
New York, 1961

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CHAPTER 1

One of the first things I understood Mr. Ouspensky to tell us was that all psychological systems, exoteric and esoteric, were mainly divided into those that took man as he is or as he is supposed to be, and those that study man from the point of view of what he may become. This system, about which we were to hear, was a psychological system and considered the study of the laws, facts, and principles that made man's evolution possible. Evolution was possible, he stated, only through efforts on man's part; and inasmuch as everything depends on his becoming a different being, such efforts could not be properly made without help which would show man how to become a different being.

The first step toward this aim, we were told, is to realize that man is a machine and that he does not really possess those qualities he ascribes to himself, such as consciousness, will, and the power to do. And, he added, before attaining any other faculties about which we dream, and which may or may not be attributes of men of "different" or "higher" being it is necessary, in the first place, to discover how to stop being a machine.

I was not among those in my group who found difficulty in accepting this statement that man was a machine. So far as I was concerned, it was evident that I, in any event, was quite mechanical; to me, things happened. I lost myself in becoming angered and upset at any provocation even at the exact moment when I was swearing to myself that I would never lose my temper again. I said what I didn't want to say; I never seemed to understand things the way others understood them, and always I had to face the problems that arose from my assumption that others thought and felt exactly as I did. This was evidently my mechanical being. I had pondered about it a great deal throughout my life, but I had concluded that it applied to me alone.

Around me I saw many capable, self-sufficient persons who apparently knew what everything was about. It had never occurred to me to question whether other people had thoughts and doubts about themselves similar to those I entertained. I knew, however, that in my particular case something very definitely

was missing. There had to be a way of knowing the truth of things, just what to do at a given time. Possibly the answer came through living or suffering a great deal; but for the present all I could do was to accept things as they were and exert my best efforts to enjoy my life without bringing misery to myself and others.

When Mr. Ouspensky stated that everybody faced the circumstances I had envisaged because man was like that, I knew he must be speaking the truth. This was true of my condition, in any case, and I knew that his statement was the formulation of the feelings I had experienced. Possibly, I reasoned, these lectures would show me how to find the way out of my predicament. Indeed, they promised the possibility of liberation for which I had always craved without knowing how it might come about.

It was apparent from Mr. Ouspensky's statements that constant struggling with myself to avoid losing my temper was a step of a sort, but not in the right direction. This, too, was evident because I was now approaching middle age; and although I had realized I must do something about my temper since I was 18, I had not yet succeeded. I despaired of ever mastering myself. "I am the Captain of my soul," I would repeat to myself time and again, like whistling in the dark; but I well knew there was something in me which I called temper that was the real captain of me, and caught hold of me when I least expected it before I could realize, at times, that it had happened.

"Yes," said Mr. Ouspensky, "one of the things that man can try to do is learn to stop the expression of negative emotions. But in order to make it a step in the right direction it is necessary to try to understand that man does not remember himself—that man cannot do. But," he added, "he can try to self-remember. Man is a machine. A machine that can know that it is a machine and can try to stop being a machine through self-remembering.

"Throughout his entire life," he said, "man sleeps, comes now and then close to the level of awakening, dreaming when asleep and when awake, barely opening his eyes in his stupor, closing them again to go on sleeping. In this state of slumber man lives, acts, thinks that he thinks, and dies. The tragedy,

the great danger, is that man does not know that he must awaken.

"Do not take my word for it," he told us. His word was never to be taken on faith for anything. In fact, his word was the first thing we were to doubt. Without doubting we would get nowhere in this particular line of work which he called The System.

"Try to look at the secondhand of your watch," he would say, "knowing all the while that it is you looking, that you are yourself, that you are where you are at the moment and nowhere else. Try this without losing awareness of the fact that you are looking at your watch. You will see that it cannot be done for more than one or two seconds."

It was a revelation. I was at once struck by the impact of his words. The experiment enabled me to fathom the reason for my previous failures. How had this escaped me? Was it possible that I had gone through life without ever seeing that I did not see? How was it possible to talk and make decisions, to impress myself with my own cleverness, to find fault with others, with life, and with things in general when I was in this comatose state? How, indeed, could I have missed it?

Mr. Ouspensky's answer was simple:

"Man lives in his negative emotions. Life hypnotizes you. You act as a puppet. You become lost in everything, and you lie—talking of things which you know nothing about 'as though you knew.' You live in the grip of your imagination, considering, identified with everything. This is not only your condition. It is the condition of man. These are what we call in this system negative emotions. They are man's chief obstacles to awakening, even after he has come to the realization that he sleeps. This is why the first step towards awakening is to try to stop the expression of negative emotions, trying at the same time to self-remember. You cannot stop these emotions. You are not told to stop them. They control you, but you can try not to express them. That is all now."

• • •

These ideas brought about a complete change in my life. They affected me to the very depths of my being, and held the promise of a ray of light by which I could find my way out of darkness.

I remember, after hearing the first lecture, that I walked out of Mr. Ouspensky's apartment feeling that I carried within myself a hallowed cathedral, and the services that would charge it with life, music, and meaning were about to begin.

There followed days and months of "work on myself" as the efforts to remember oneself, to try to observe oneself, to try not to express negative emotions, and so on, are called in the System. By this time I had categorical proof that I was asleep. My observations had clearly shown that I was almost in the lowest state of consciousness possible to man. Mr. Ouspensky had told us about these states of consciousness. He drew a diagram to show

- ordinary sleep
- sleep with dreams
- waking consciousness, so called, supposed to be our ordinary state
- consciousness

"We fluctuate from one condition to another," he said, "and never have more than quick flashes of the fourth state of consciousness. But these flashes, with the help of memory, cause us to remember these moments and to assume that we have been conscious." Besides these states, we were told there are two other states possible to man, namely the state of self-consciousness and the state of objective-consciousness, but they are so far removed from us at the moment that for our present purposes we can consider them nonexistent.

I was able to ascertain—without a shadow of a doubt—that my thoughts were not generally with me where my body happened to be at any given time. There was nothing extraordinary about it. It meant simply that my mind was always far away, actually lost in something that had caught its attention nearby, or all mixed up, or delightedly jumping over a chain of associated ideas. Whatever happened outside of me, whatever took place within me, my attention was immediately drawn to and at no time did I really know "this is I watching, I thinking, I walking, I dreaming, I doing." I would lose myself for hours at a time, and then come to the sudden realization of the fact that I had not remembered myself.

At these moments I knew I was asleep, only attempting to open my eyes as one does in the morning when one struggles to awaken from ordinary sleep and persistently the body wishes to slumber. At times the moments of struggling to awaken would seem prolonged, and the thought invariably came that I would tell Mr. Ouspensky about it. I mused on what I would say in the group; a soliloquy began. This inner talking, Mr. Ouspensky had told us, was a negative manifestation in men: talking for the sake of talking, rambling on, wasting energy, asleep. Actually what happened was I became lost in inner talk as I became lost in everything else outside of me. I told Mr. Ouspensky about this observation in the group.

"Now you have a good taste of identification," he told me. "You must try to avoid identification, especially with the System."

"Why is it undesirable to identify oneself with the System?" asked a young woman.

"Identification means loss," he answered. "Identify yourself with the System and you lose it."

There were many questions about identification. People spoke of their experiences, and wondered whether it was possible to observe oneself being identified. I remember his answer.

"Necessary to observe. Where there is observation, there is no identification."

Besides "necessary to observe," he would always urge us to "think, think." It was useful and very important to think about identification, he said, to think a great deal about it until we really knew what it meant.

I understood Mr. Ouspensky to tell us there were, in general, four different stages of identification. Some religious schools knew all about them and had given very clear accounts of them in Early Church writings entitled "Philokalia," which is the name of a collection of writings by the early fathers of the Church and still in use in Eastern monasteries for the training of monks. He told us that he did not like to bring up the religious approach because our way was not the way of the emotional man but that it was very interesting to read these writings of which he spoke, and to realize how clearly identification had been known and defined in Greek terms as:

Proshole, or impact, shock
sinousia, or interest, attraction
sundiasmos, or desire
pathos, or mania, the state in which one is altogether lost, as
is the case in lunacy.

"We use no classifications in our work," he said. "We try to observe these states in ourselves, to struggle against them. In this way we learn to understand them better."

"But how can a person accomplish great undertakings unless he is completely identified-carried away, ecstatic, lost in the project?" asked someone.

"More consciously," he replied.

"But people have accomplished great things exactly because they were identified with their pursuit," protested another.

"What people?" he asked.

"Many people, for instance—Beethoven."

"Maybe he died in sleep."

"Do you mean to say that he could compose his symphonies, give us his exquisite music, and yet be asleep—a genius like Beethoven?"

"Genius is no guarantee. Man can be a genius and sleep. He can write books, poems, philosophy. But the aim—what was his aim?"

"How do we learn to identify ourselves with the good things of life?" insisted the young woman who wondered why identification with the System was undesirable.

"What means good things?" Mr. Ouspensky wanted to know.

After a long while, since no answer was forthcoming, he told us that our problem consisted in learning how to rid ourselves of any kind of identification; it was undesirable to learn to identify, and the only way to struggle with identification was in trying to self-remember. "In order to do this," he said, "it is first of all necessary to understand the meaning of identification, especially what it means in oneself, which is quite difficult to do since one is usually identified with what one is trying to observe."

"If ordinary man—number 1, number 2, number 3—does not struggle against identification," said Mr. Ouspensky, "he remains as he is. If he tries, he may become man number 4."

We were not to define identification in terms of anything else,

he told us; it meant just that—identification. It could be emotional or intellectual, but it produced mechanical reactions that kept one acting always in the same way.

He spoke of the importance of learning a common language with which we could understand each other when we spoke. "In ordinary life," he said, "men find it difficult to understand one another because they do not give the same meaning to the words they use. The words arouse different associations in each man, and each one takes for granted that he understands the other, although actually, at times, they argue when they share the same ideas but express them differently and believe that they agree when they do not."

He said that the System has its own vocabulary and urged us to become familiar with it and to try to use it exclusively, so far as possible, when discussing these ideas with him or among ourselves.

"In this System," he went on, "if you take the concept man, you will always know just what kind of man you are speaking about. We recognize seven categories of man, number 1, number 2, number 3, representing the physical, the emotional, the intellectual man, respectively. That is, those who react physically, emotionally, or analytically to conditions. All of us, as we are, fall into one or another of these categories. Then we have man number 4, or the balanced man, who already knows his condition and the direction he wishes to follow. He is the man who is relatively free from the law of accident, the man in whom the centers work more harmoniously than they do in us. Man number 5 is the man of unity. He is one, he has indivisibility. Man number 6 is the man of self-consciousness, but he can still lose everything he has attained. And man number 7, who is the man of objective consciousness, already has all that it is possible for man to have and is a power within the limits of the solar system. Man number 7 can no longer lose anything—whatever he has is his."

These different categories of men have different beings. Being here is used in the sense of existing, in the same sense that a stone has being, or a star, or a mountain. These men have the being of a man, but they are men of different materiality in whom different centers predominate.

I understood Mr. Ouspensky to say that in men of the higher

categories—number 5, number 6, number 7—two higher centers function: the higher emotional and the higher intellectual centers. These centers are also present in ordinary man, but ordinary man misuses the energy of his ordinary centers which do not operate with their own energy but steal from one another. Only when ordinary centers begin to operate with their own energy, without stealing from one another—particularly from the emotional center—may man be able to use his higher centers.

Mr. Ouspensky explained to us that man number 5, man number 6, and man number 7 live in an esoteric circle; a circle of their own where they speak their own language, which we cannot understand. All of us, man number 1, man number 2, man number 3, live in the exoteric or outer circle, the circle of confusion of tongues or Tower of Babel, where nobody understands anybody. And man number 4, the balanced man, lives in the in-between or mesoteric circle that adjoins the other two. He works on himself, and tries to learn the language of the innermost circle. We were told to think about the category we thought we belonged to. Also we were to think about what it would mean to be the man we were trying to become with the help of this work—man number 4, the balanced man.

"Very useful to think about this," we were told.

"Does man number 4 understand in the same manner as I or anyone else among us understands?" asked one of those present.

"The understanding of man number 4 is not like our understanding," he was told. "There is understanding of man number 1, understanding of man number 2, understanding of man number 3, all on a very ordinary level of understanding—our own level. Then there is understanding of man number 4, which is already different, less subjective, more comprehensive. The understanding of man number 5, of man number 6, of man number 7, is already beyond our present comprehension.

"Everything is the same with regard to the various categories of man," Mr. Ouspensky went on to say. "There is a world, a religion, a philosophy, a love, an art, for each category of man—number 1, number 2, number 3, the balanced man, and the three higher categories of man. For that reason, in our System, it is always possible for us to understand one another,

to know about what we are talking and about whom we are talking, provided we use the correct vocabulary."

"Earlier this evening," said a young man, "you spoke about aim. Would it be correct to assume that man number 4 knows his aim?"

"Certainly he knows his aim," answered Mr. Ouspensky.

And then, before bringing the lecture to an end that evening, he said that we must exert a real effort to think about our aim, what we want, what each one is after and why he wishes to work, because we must know what we are doing in this Work. This requires knowledge on our part: knowledge of the price that we have to pay for it, and each one must decide for himself whether or not his aim is worth it. He added that we must try to remember that there are immediate aims, small or large, and then the one great, long-range common aim of awakening, of becoming a different being. He said it is necessary to think often about it, about what it means to become a different being.

At our next meeting almost everyone asked the same questions: "What is a change in being?" "Does it take long to change being?" "How does the change in being take place?"

Before long it became evident that many of us apparently understood by "a change in being" something supernormal, supernatural; that is, the power to hear the thoughts of others, to levitate, to do "astral" traveling, even to acquire a "third eye" endowing one with a sort of mental television of one's own and other such attributes. But Mr. Ouspensky told us that he knew nothing at all about such powers, that they might be faculties of higher categories of men, but since he was not one of them he could not tell us anything about it. Moreover, he added, so far as we ordinary number 1, number 2, number 3 men are concerned we must work on ourself very hard in order to develop the faculties that we think we have but do not—namely, consciousness, will, and the power to do.

"But there are groups where intelligent people are taught to develop some of these powers that you say we do not have," someone protested.

"Good," he answered. "No reason why you should not join them. Maybe better suited to your taste."

It was a logical answer. Yet many took it as a rebuff and left him giving no further thought to the work that he invited them

to do in the inner kingdom that was their self.

Mr. Ouspensky urged us to work on our negative emotions by endeavoring "not to express" them. This was not so appealing, especially to those who were averse to admitting that their clairvoyance, clairaudience, or ability to do automatic writing and such, were useless in the work. They were insistent on their belief that these things were somehow "different." Mr. Ouspensky was equally adamant.

"Ordinary man has no will, cannot do, cannot change anything. But by working on himself, trying to self-remember, trying not to express negative emotions, trying to observe himself, he may eventually see a change in his being. When this takes place, conditions are already different for him."

"Since you tell us that ordinary man has no will, what else can bring this change in him?" asked one of our belligerent group members.

"Effort, directed toward the aim of awakening may have this result," was his answer.

In my case, I had no difficulty in admitting the absence of those powers. This, quite obviously, was my condition. I had been searching for help to overcome it, but did not know the direction from which it would come. Therefore I was not reluctant to admit to myself that he was stating a fact.

Mr. Ouspensky spoke again about man's negative emotions and told us that we had sufficient energy to do the work that we had to do on ourselves, but that we unwisely wasted it in arguments, needless talking, lies, imagination, incessant inner chatter, and so on.

"What can we do to acquire more energy?" he was asked.

"You cannot do," he said once more. "It is not a question so much of acquiring energy as it is of saving it from being wasted."

"Is that why self-remembering is useful?" someone insisted.

"What is useful and necessary is to remember that we don't remember—never remember—and don't know about it." He was firm about this.

"Would frequent realization that one doesn't self-remember give one better control of one's machine?"

To this question he answered, "It doesn't happen like that. Experience will show. But again I say, from my point of view,

what is most important is to realize that we never knew about self-remembering and now we do know."

* * *

Bringing up the subject of man's centers once more, Mr. Ouspensky told us to remember that each center—moving, instinctive, emotional, intellectual—has a positive and a negative part, which parts in turn are divided each into three parts: moving-instinctive, emotional, intellectual, also similarly subdivided. It would be most useful to try to remember this when we made efforts to observe our various functions.

That evening I understood him to say that all the energy that man needs to do a full day's work is accumulated in the machine two days in advance. That is, I am producing today all the energy that I will need for ordinary purposes to do my work as a machine the day after tomorrow. As we frequently function on reserves that are nonexistent this would be disastrous, were it not that our instinctive center knows how to come to the rescue by tapping the big accumulator.

Mr. Ouspensky drew a diagram showing that each center is connected with two small accumulators that store the special energy that it needs for its functions, and that these small accumulators are in turn connected with a large accumulator which may be tapped when the energy available in the small accumulators has been exhausted.

There were many questions on this occasion. I remember some of them very clearly.

"Is it possible to tap the big accumulator at will?"

"Who has will can do many things that are not possible for us," said Mr. Ouspensky.

"Does attention affect the accumulators?" *

"Sometimes, yes. But it doesn't enter here. Sometimes the accumulators work without attention."

"I cannot understand why you say that attention does not enter here."

"Very often it does not. In instinctive center functions proceed without attention."

"Since the instinctive center knows how to do this, does it mean that we could also learn to do this?"

"The instinctive center may know really dangerous things.

It is good that we must learn before we can speak with it."

"I understood that attention was one of the great accumulators of energy?" asked another person.

"Quite right. But many things happen without attention. Sometimes the higher parts of centers work with attention, but we do not know how to work in the intellectual part of instinctive center with attention."

"So the large accumulator is in instinctive center?"

"Trick, trick. You try to be clever."

"Can the intellectual center control the emotional center?"

"No, too slow. The centers have different speeds."

"How can we best develop our centers?"

"Man's centers are already developed almost to the highest possibility. There is no question of developing them but of using them in the right way. Centers not only steal energy from one another, they sometimes try to help one another do their work, but instead of helping they spoil everything. For instance, you decide to do something but instead you do something else. This is wrong work of centers. There is too much coordination of centers. Later you will be given exercises to break this coordination."

"Could we say, theoretically, that without the Moon man's moving center would not function?"

"I don't know. We don't study 'what would happen if.' We study things as they are."

"Would the study of the laws of the various worlds help us to understand the work of our various centers?"

"Yes, if you know how to study them rightly. Everything you study rightly helps you to understand something else."

"But suppose there is no energy left in my small accumulators. . ." someone ventured to say.

Mr. Ouspensky stopped him. "In our work we don't suppose. We observe."

"But if I have no energy. . ."

Again he was interrupted. "If is not a word in our vocabulary."

"Well, then, when I am at a low level of energy, how can I tap my accumulators—since I don't know how?"

"Perhaps you will yawn. Your instinctive center will know what to do."

When Mr. Ouspensky spoke I felt I understood him, and I wished to try to work on myself to stop being a machine. I realized that it was true, that I was not a balanced person in any sense of the word—that I didn't even know what a balanced man was; but it was something I wished to be. Mr. Ouspensky repeatedly insisted that we listen better so as to understand more.

That evening I promised myself that I would really try. I felt everything in me wished for this change in being that Mr. Ouspensky spoke about. I began to see that I was always eager "to do" everything except let things be, and merely try to listen, to observe, and ponder as the Work suggested. This turned out to be an incredibly difficult thing to try to do; months elapsed before I understood its great value, and years, before I had some success in putting it into practice.

However, my struggle in this direction finally was the channel through which grace came in increased understanding, and flickering changes began to occur here and there in myself until many things lost their hypnotic sway over me and my attitude toward them assumed altogether different forms, always useful for work on myself.

System ideas were like manna from heaven for me: they fed my hunger for understanding, and things that had puzzled me, things that I had learned without digesting, that I had heard without listening, that I had seen without taking them in, all began to unfold within me as I comprehended their meaning. I pondered over System diagrams and System concepts and had unexpected flashes that showed me the relationship, the meaning of words, of whole sentences, of symbols, which I had until now used and talked about without knowing in the least what they really meant. Even old fairy tales became eloquent in association with these new ideas that served as fuel for the new, wonderful trips that I was taking into the realm of my unexplored mind.

"Ah! This is what that means. . .!" I would tell myself, delighted. And my trust in the Work grew with this new understanding. Understanding, Mr. Ouspensky had told us, is the means between knowledge and being. We must try to learn System ideas because through this effort we work on knowledge; while through our efforts to observe, to try to stop the expression of

negative emotions, to try to self-remember, to do external considering we work on being. Only in this way can we attain a more balanced functioning of our centers; only in this way can we hope to become man number 4, the balanced man.

"This is very, very far from us," he would say.

Mr. Ouspensky had already spoken in the general group we attended about the various centers of man.

In our group he urged us to try to think of this while we observed our functions: thinking, feeling, moving instinctive functions.

"Do we study the sex functions also?" asked a young man.

"We talk about the sex center separately when we know much more about many other things," he answered.

"How do we study higher emotional and higher intellectual functions?" someone wished to know.

"They do not exist for us at our level," she was told.

"Other systems," Mr. Ouspensky added, "begin by giving the first 'shock' to man's organism at the point where sex energy is produced. But in the Fourth Way, the Way of the Sly Man, we begin our work on impressions. Moreover," he told us, "other systems hold that all men have higher being bodies but must create higher centers in themselves, their training is geared in that direction. Our System, on the other hand, proposes that higher centers are already present in man and do not function because of the muddled condition existing in his lower centers. But all men must create a higher being body by dint of hard work on themselves.

"Can you define the meaning of a higher being body?" asked one of the ladies in our group.

"We avoid definitions. Think."

"Mr. Ouspensky," called someone very excitedly, "I understood you to say that the Work is divided into work on knowledge and work on being. I can see, theoretically, that a man may acquire a great deal of knowledge and become one-sided. Could he acquire too much being, and in that sense a higher being body?"

"I see no connection." Mr. Ouspensky smiled as he added, "It is such a rare case. When we have a case here among those

in this room that someone has acquired too much being, we will talk about it."

"Is the higher being body what is known as 'spirit' in Christian terminology?" asked another person.

To this there was no answer. Mr. Ouspensky was superb in his silence when he felt that we wished to be fed with a spoon rather than struggle with ourselves to reach our own conclusions before posing our questions.

This statement about all men not having a higher being body, or what I had assumed to be the soul until then, was something that I did not readily understand. There was nothing in my background to predispose me to accept it. But I respected Mr. Ouspensky's reasoning, having always successfully verified the exactitude of his words. Besides, I loved him for what he had already given me. Therefore I merely shelved the problem for a later date, hoping that the time would come when I would be better prepared to cope with it.

Yet, we had to have questions; they had to be based on the subjects we were discussing at the time, or at least refer to them in some way. Nothing unrelated must be brought in to change the trend of the discussion.

"Who has no questions gets nothing," he would tell us. "You must pay by asking questions. There was a rule in one of the early London groups that payment must be at least three questions from each person. Write them down, or ask them orally, but there must be questions. The answers are not important. But no questions, no material for talk."

And he would sit, arms crossed, clamping down. He could hold silence for as long as he saw fit, condescending to say nothing on such occasions until some reluctant or frightened wavery voice would ask something that bore the mark of not being altogether formatory and showed personal effort.

On one such occasion he had been speaking about the importance of getting as much as we could for ourselves from these ideas, of exerting every possible effort to work in order to have a change in being, without wasting our energy in seeking to force other people to change their being or to see things as we saw them. I asked him, "But what about humanity? Are we not supposed to help others?"

"Why think so much of others? First you must put yourself in order. Now you can give absolutely nothing. First, be selfish. Certainly you must all be teachers some day, but you must take one step at a time. When you go to the door you must start walking from where you are sitting."

During one of these talks Mr. Ouspensky stated that "everybody wastes energy, and anyone who works on himself may easily pick it up for his own use—in the street, in restaurants, everywhere." We, the members of this group, began to wonder how we could acquire some of this free energy for our respective selves. We wanted to know in what manner it would be possible to feel energy thus acquired entering into us, how to know that one was receiving it, where to go for it, and so on.

It was an amusing experience because we reached a point where instead of acquiring any energy we were losing our own in this quest, thanks to our imagination. From our reports, from our questions, it was evident that all kinds of fanciful thoughts were going through our minds. We were thinking of Yoga practices, of magic, of all kinds of fairytale-like things which we were expecting to learn by placing ourselves en rapport with these sources of dissemination of energy!

But finally we came to the realization that the matter was more simple than we had anticipated and we found, through personal experience, that there really is a great deal of energy going to waste all around us and that it is possible to utilize it for working on ourselves. However, we realized further that both our observing that energy is wastefully flowing somewhere, and our taking it in, require effort—personal effort on our part—in the sense of work on oneself, or trying to be present.

For instance, one morning I was thinking about this waste of energy as I rode in an elevator jammed full of people at the subway rush hour. I was pushed into the lift and banged against a woman who stood her ground tensely, hard as a rock, rigid and tied up in knots. She pushed me away from her, and I could feel the tension and rigidity that gripped her.

Never too slow to respond to a push with something of a similar kind myself, at this moment I found myself entertaining thoughts of an entirely different nature. I had a flash of understanding and "saw" the waste of energy that was taking place through this particular woman. And with this flash of understanding

there came an inner joy, deepened by the feeling that I was saving my own energy from leaking at the same time that I was picking up for my use the energy that was here being dispersed. My failure to express the negative emotion that I had been about to show turned into a realization of what was taking place, and I had a feeling of my own presence.

This all took place in a second: I had been about to push back when this flash came, and I sensed my arm relaxing as understanding arose within me. There was an upsurge of a sensation of warmth that enveloped my entire body from head to feet, and gave me a delightful feeling of freedom. I thought: This heat represents the energy that I am storing. It will serve me to work on myself.

Simultaneously my heart responded and I felt my wish to work on myself, my wish to remember myself. I was grateful for this experience, and my heart leapt in joy as the thought came that by not responding angrily I had actually "taken" energy wasted by the other woman to store away for my own use.

This realization has been helpful ever since. The feeling that it brought about lasted a very long time indeed.

I have never forgotten its glow!

CHAPTER 2

Time passed, and the work began to awaken in me the first taste of freedom. I had been trying to observe identification in myself, and I came ready to report at the group meeting.

"Mr. Ouspensky," I said, "I am identified with thoughts that go on within me, wondering what people will say, whether or not they know more than I do, dress better than I, are more articulate than I, whether they approve of me, look at me, laugh at me, like or dislike me, applaud me, deride me, or whatever. And I have observed that all this makes me rather miserable most of the time."

"Good description of internal considering, not identification," he said. "Continue to observe, and we will have material for talk."

"What is external considering, how does it differ from internal considering?" someone asked.

"External considering is thinking of other persons, putting yourself in their place. It results in tolerance. Very desirable," he answered.

"But internal considering is evil?" asked the same person.

"The word evil did not appear," he said. "You supplied the adjective."

"How does one attain freedom from internal considering, whatever that may be?" she insisted.

"In the first place, it is necessary to find out what it is," he said. "Bring observations, and we will talk about it."

The possibility of obtaining freedom from this particular form of slavery appealed to me greatly from the beginning. I began to struggle with myself to silence all these thoughts that kept me in bondage, making efforts to try to remember myself when they attacked me.

I can hardly describe my relief upon understanding, and verifying for myself, that practically everybody is in the same bondage: afraid of everybody else, all pretending, considering.

I saw plainly that the people about whom I was considering were in turn busy considering me, whether they impressed me properly, said the clever thing, and so on. Higher ups, lower downs, we all considered.

It was a surprise for me to find myself so attentive to other people, to their feelings, and to their attitude toward me. This concern affected every phase of my daily life and I saw plainly, by observing the now well-known symptoms, that others were not at all interested in me. They, in fact, did not see me at all; they were instead actively engaged in doing the same thing—following their own thoughts, trying to impress me and everyone else around them.

Little by little I was freed from other people in this sense. I understood, by the taste of it, that I was responsible only to myself and no one else, because others were not at all sure of themselves either. Surface criticism, rebuff, harshness, disdain—all equally superficial. One can upset them with a simple glance at so innocuous a thing as a person's shoelace. A glance in the direction of anything equally idiotic will turn over many an apple cart!

Many years later, as a result of diligent work in this direction, I came to feel that I was responsible to myself, and myself alone, for anything I felt, thought, wore, said, or did. I was not running in a contest or competing with anyone for admiration or acceptance; rebuke and applause were equally useless to me, because it was I alone who had to accept or reject myself. With this realization I began to shed my fetters.

The real value of this inner feeling of freedom lay, for me, in the knowledge that the balance rested within myself; I could do as I wished, provided my own inner observer accepted it, and I was free to enjoy this inner sense of liberty so long as I remembered to do a great deal of external considering also.

External considering is something akin to tact, plus a large measure of good will. It must be learned in action through personal experience by participating in work with others, always ready to allow for the possibility of their being still in bondage to inner considering.

Of course it is difficult. Nothing is easy in our work. One important fact we cannot overlook is that it is practical work. But the application of Work discipline naturally tends to bring about

certain changes in oneself to foster this feeling of understanding. It is in the very difficulty of the Work, in facing ourselves as our own opponent, in meeting the resistance that we alone can offer ourselves that we obtain the right to refer to the System as "The Work." For work on oneself it is constantly, because we are always with ourselves, and so long as there is life in us—without taking care to remember ourselves—we stand the chance of losing all we have gained through our own efforts. As for others with whom we work, it is here where experience and tolerance come into play. We put up with one another, draw on mutual experiences, enrich one another, bother one another—and we all grow.

When inner considering finally began to be silent in myself my burden was lifted. Freedom had come. I began to understand why it is said in the Work that no one understands anyone else. Indeed, our thoughts are always racing within us and we hardly hear, let alone understand, when others speak. I know, because I saw it first of all in myself. That is why we are told that things are a reflection of our own attitude; that we attract the things that happen to us because we are what we are.

This understanding has helped me to forgive anyone who interprets my actions or my words wrongly. For how could it be otherwise, since they never see me, or hear me, since they sleep as soundly as I do, and are just as worried as I once was with thoughts going through their mind and preventing them from seeing what is actually taking place around them? Poor little mechanical people that we are! Life eats us up, and it never feeds us as it is our privilege to be fed.

Seeing this, my attitude toward people changed and I felt that in my inner world the Work had begun to build its stronghold.

* * *

Many persons in my group were disturbed by the thought that man is a machine. They preferred to think that we studied psychology—a psychological system, nothing else. We often forgot the fact that the System studies mechanics—our own mechanics—since we are machines and "psychology" refers to men and not to machines. This is what Mr. Ouspensky had told us.

That we are machines is evident. Why this simple statement should so deeply disturb some persons was never clear to me.

At the beginning it was rather amusing when members of our group came to Mr. Ouspensky with all kinds of lovely speeches and carefully prepared accounts of their experiences: feeling the presence of angels from above, hearing masters who talked aloud to them through horns held by mediums in seances, masters who made their presence felt by touch, and so on; or having a sensation of swooning with the entire world contained in her heart, as one of our ladies reported, or floating in the air. There were any number of unbelievable experiences which many persons who came to our group at the beginning sincerely felt they had undergone.

"How could machines register such lofty emotions?" some would ask.

He usually answered, "Inspirazione, intuizione, immaginazione!"

His listeners often felt highly insulted. Many turned away never to return, accusing him of being a vain old man, a hard materialist, and worse things besides. But he did not compromise. This was a practical system that we were studying on a purely practical level. We were studying our machines, trying to learn how to work on ourselves, to learn as much as we could about ourselves, then we could learn about the Work. Years would go by before we could even dream of doing anything if, indeed, there were other things to be done. That was all.

As to swooning, floating in the air, hearing voices, and other such experiences, Mr. Ouspensky told us that he had never experienced them and, consequently, he was not in a position to discuss them, but that these experiences, if we had read about them, were not true of men in the lower rungs of the ladder such as we were ourselves. With this pronouncement he cut short all intentions to wax eloquent in personal mystical dreams.

On one occasion there was a lively evening when someone said, "But look here! There is such a thing as moments when the soul in you expands and has a taste of ecstasy. These are very choice and rare moments. Do you mean to say they do not exist?"

"What does not exist?"

"These rare moments."

"What kind of moments?"

"Rare moments."

"Never heard of them. Next please."

The question always came up at some time or other, with new people, with people from our group, from all sides. The answers would vary slightly, but it was significant that he never encouraged anyone to go into dreams and self-delusion.

"There may be such moments," is the most I heard him admit, "but they do not concern us. As we are, we cannot have them. It is the privilege of higher men. We are only machines."

"What is it, then, that we are trying to do here?" asked a truculent voice once.

"I don't know what you try to do. I know what I do. You must answer for yourself and speak in the singular."

On another occasion the question was, "Then, do you deny clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy?"

"But what do these words mean?"

He received a sincere answer, no doubt. One could always tell what he considered sincere from the manner in which he answered, for he never failed to crush down questions that were redundant and learned or strived to create that impression. He said, "Many things are possible to man who awakens. But it takes a tremendous amount of energy. Many things can be done, some perhaps take as much energy as it takes the Earth to go around the Sun in one day. You see, we do not have this kind of energy. Here we learn to know our machines. We try to learn how to stop leaks of energy. This we must do first."

At times there were persons who insisted on receiving some sort of answer as though their lives depended on the assurance that there were people who levitated, or saw in the dark, or what not. I heard him say once, "In this System we learn mechanics only. We are machines, we wish to learn how we can stop being machines. About possible powers of higher man we cannot talk. For us it is imagination. Imagination is negative emotion, makes us lose the possibility of what we want."

"Do you believe it is possible, not fantasy, to be able to write automatically?" he was asked on one of these occasions.

"Certainly not fantasy. Fact. We do everything automatically, writing too."

"What I mean is that you serve as a medium for other forces to write through you, and you write automatically," insisted this gentleman.

"What means other forces?"

"Well, I cannot say. . ."

"Learn to say first and we can talk about it," he replied.

This brought matters to a close, leaving the person highly indignant about the manner in which he had been dismissed. When the lecture was over, this man informed a few of us that he would not return. "How can one learn anything if he will not listen to what you have to say?" he complained.

But I, personally, was not interested in doing automatic writing, or seeing visions, or having special sensations, in projecting thought at a distance, or anything of the sort. Mr. Ouspensky could be curt in his answers; he could display the irritability for which he was famous among us, and I would still respect him. Had he not told us he was not a teacher but a fellow traveler on his way, and only those should follow who jolly well felt like doing it as he would not stoop to pick us up unless we were running to catch up with him?

All sincerely felt questions received an answer of sorts from Mr. Ouspensky.

One day, as a result of his having told us the story of the "Sly Man" who had tea with the devil at an Oriental "chaicana," and heard the latter's complaint about contemporary people who have no souls that he may take to hell to keep his business going, someone asked without any visible connection at the moment, "Is there a separate cosmos for the devil?"

He accepted the question.

"What do you know about the devil?" was his answer.

"I know that he was an archangel who rebelled and fell down from heaven, and that he was thrust down into hell because he dared to think that he was equal to God."

"That is the Bible version," he said, "but it is not enough. The devil is a very important personage. You must know about him. Next time, each one of you will tell me what he knows about the devil. Then, if there are any questions maybe I will answer them."

At the next meeting everyone came prepared to take the devil by the horns. The first question was:

"Is the idea of the devil accepted by the System?"

"I was very glad to know that it is," said Mr. Ouspensky.

"But I asked you to come ready to tell me what you know about

the devil, and here you are asking me questions. I ask, what do you know about the devil?"

"He is a gentleman in checkered trousers," ventured someone in the group.

"Literature," answered Mr. Ouspensky.

"There is also a version of Satan according to which he is one of two angels present at the time of death. He has been with each man throughout his life, as has his good angel. At death, each angel weighs the record he kept of good and evil deeds on the Great Balance of Judgment. Whichever angel has a record that makes the scales drop takes the soul of the departed person as his prize." A young woman said this while many of the others nodded in assent to show that the version was also known to them.

"That is the Persian version," said Mr. Ouspensky. "Not enough. Let me hear more."

"I have always felt sorry for Satan," I started to say, when he interrupted:

"Did you say sorry? But why?"

"Because I read in a book. *The Sorrows of Satan*, that the devil really wants man to resist temptation, for when he does resist it the devil will win the right to find his way back to heaven. For every man who resists him, he is one step closer to his goal."

"This is poetry," he smiled, "bad poetry. You don't know the devil. What will you do when you meet him?"

"Do we have to meet him because he is in one of the cosmoses through which we must pass to ascend in the Ray of Creation?" asked someone.

"Inspirazione, intuizione, immaginazione," he replied.

"Is there a place for him that you can tell us about?" asked another.

"Certainly there is a place for him. I am not telling you about it. I asked you to tell me."

"Is he in Macrocosmos?" wondered one of the men present.

"Too big," was his answer. "Look closer, may find him."

"Do you mean that the devil is in us?" asked the same man.

"Too easy. The devil may come, and you can do nothing because you cannot make effort to think of good question. I am not responsible."

"The devil is a liar. . ." began someone else, but he stopped her.

"Quotation from a book, or did you hear me say it? We will speak of it some other time, and then perhaps you will be able to tell me something. The devil is not only interesting, but very important. There is nothing imaginary about him."

"Then you do not believe that he is symbolic?" he was asked.

"No. I always thought he was very concrete."

"How does one find the devil to know what he is like?" asked the same person.

"Don't hurry, you will meet him," he answered. "He works through considering, through negative emotions, through imagination. But if you fight against these dangers, you are safe. First I teach you how to fight danger before teaching you where it comes from."

"Would you say that the devil is connected with the Moon?" someone wanted to know.

Mr. Ouspensky said no, that it would be a very easy devil, whereas the devil was much cleverer than that; he didn't think about the Moon.

"Are the laws under which man lives a result of the work of the devil, is that why he is so powerful?" came another question.

He replied, "No, the laws under which man lives can exist without the devil. The devil is powerful because we don't know enough about him. We don't ask the right questions. The important question which would teach us more about him is, 'What is his role, how does he happen to be there?' The purpose, we must think about purpose. Suppose you meet somebody who knows the answers and you don't ask the right questions, how can you learn anything?"

Someone suggested, "The devil's purpose is to keep men from evolving. His purpose and his interest are said to be in man's soul. Is that not so?"

"Suppose it is so," he admitted. "Try to connect things."

"Well, the Moon feeds on the souls of men. . ."

Mr. Ouspensky interrupted the speaker, "No, no," he said. "The Moon feeds on souls only in the sense of life energy. The devil has much better ideas. Necessary to learn to cheat him."

There was a silence for a while. Then he said, "Enough of the devil. Think about it, and perhaps we will speak again some

other time. If you don't know about the devil, your position is very unsuccessful."

The subject of the devil did not come up again so far as my particular group was concerned except for a few passing references when it seemed to me that the devil was placed on the level of the planets. I believe we were told that we must be prepared to recognize him, and to defeat him at all lower levels if we are to be successful in the final encounter at this higher one.

But he did return to the story of the "Sly Man" several times. We learned that the devil told the Sly Man that contemporary men have no souls because they do not remember themselves. The Sly Man made a bargain with the devil, and was taught how to make souls against his promise to see to it that they would get to hell. But the Sly Man devised a plan whereby the souls could also find their way to heaven, provided they remembered not to say that they remembered themselves. It was thus that he taught people, but most of them, when they died and came to the gates of heaven, were taken by the devil after all; it happened because they forgot to remember themselves, and said they had remembered themselves—just the reverse of what they had been taught.

This story did not appeal to me. Actually it bothered me. At the time I was still emotionally averse to talking lightly about subjects which I had been taught to treat with respect. It had been a long struggle with myself to lose the fear of the devil which had been ingrained in me since childhood, I simply could not bear to think lightly about Satan. But my interest in System ideas won the battle. True to my decision, I shelved this story for the time being together with many other things I did not understand until such occasion when I would hear more about it and know what it meant. In those days, I always worked feeling my way in the dark, like the blind—curious to know what lay ahead, eager to see and to hear more, but ready to step back the moment anything spelled spiritual danger.

Thanks to this attitude, I have enjoyed throughout later years many displays of emotional fireworks that make my inner life rich and full. For now and then, an inner "STOP!" pervades me: it comes all by itself as a gift from heaven, like a magic wand waved by memory over all those ideas that were shelved

away for future reference. I have sudden flashes of understanding when I see clearly the meaning of these things I had not understood—their relations and associations, the patterns they weave, the truths they embody. And my heart experiences that feeling of warmth and gratitude which I have never been able to describe; my mind feels the awe of wonder, and I know, with a certainty that cannot be questioned, that "the System is greater than any man."

When these moments close upon me I feel nearer to God. I have a feeling of my own presence that remains with me and gives an entirely different taste to my movements, to everything that surrounds me. I mention this only in passing; it is merely my own subjective way of reacting to the thoughts evoked in me by System ideas.

Moreover, I say God advisedly. It is I who speak. It is true that Mr. Ouspensky never discussed religion except to say that it is one of the four ways open to the man who wants to awaken; that it is the Way of the Monk or emotional man, but this way, as does the Way of the Yoga for the intellectual man and the Way of the Fakir for the physical man, demands as initial payment that man give up everything. And, he added, inasmuch as all of us are ordinary people seeking our liberation in life itself amidst its daily troubles and tribulations we cannot follow the way of religion unless we go into a monastery, nor can we follow the way of the Yoga unless we go into an ashram.

There were a few times, it is true, when Mr. Ouspensky answered questions such as, "What does the System say about God?" by replying, "I never heard of Him."

Or, when someone asked, "Is there no God, then?"

"Perhaps not, no guarantee," he said.

When members of my group insisted on asking him questions about God, Mr. Ouspensky would say, "Leave it alone."

But I would inwardly say as I listened: This is not for me. God IS for me. I know it in my heart, and I love Him.

My attitude, in these instances, was twofold: I affirmed my own belief in God, and I knew instinctively that this was the right way for Mr. Ouspensky to answer because, no matter how holy, we bandied terms about much too easily. We spoke of God in the same breath and on the same level as we had spoken of our soul or of the devil without actually knowing what

we really meant and thought about Him. I felt that Mr. Ouspensky wished those of us who thought they believed in God to fight inwardly with themselves and openly with him for their belief; to question it or to defy him, to assert or deny it, to come to grips with ourselves, to stop being hypocrites and to bring our concept of the divinity, without any admixture of ordinary ideas, to the highest level possible to us. I always had this feeling about Mr. Ouspensky. And it was justified one day when he was telling us about the many I's present in man, how he has no unity, how he is not one but many. He scolded us severely saying that we must never say "I" before we knew what we were saying.

"Look what happened to the devil," he said. And I protested:

"But, Mr. Ouspensky, God said to Moses on Mount Tabor, 'I am that I am!'"

I was sitting in the first row. He paused, and looked at me for a while, and then said tenderly and very softly:

"Yes. But you see, you are not God. In you there is no 'I.' You must work. Work hard to have 'I.'"

"If only I had enough energy to work!" I said sincerely.

"You have it," he assured me. "You waste it in arguments." He gave me a long look, and then indulged in the shadow of a smile.

At that moment I understood that we did not understand his apparent denial: he denied that we might avow our belief; denied that we might question and thereby clear away our doubts. He denied to make us think, to make us take our stand consciously wherever we would choose; to believe because we chose to believe, not because we had been told to believe. That was very important to me. I loved God. I should never have been able to "work against God" no matter how faraway my mind might carry me in my wanderings and rebellions against religion as it had been given to me.

Actually it was the quest after God that brought me into the Work. He was there, in my heart, but I was unable to understand Him and the manner in which He was said to manifest Himself through the suffering and agonies of man. I was eager to understand this contradiction, but could find no satisfaction either in my religion—which demanded blind obedience from me, as I then understood it—or in many other methods, re-

ligious or philosophical, which started from the premise that I, myself, was God—a thought I always found repugnant and unappealing.

As to the fact that I lost my energy in arguments—it was one of the best things that Mr. Ouspensky ever said to me personally. His statement opened my eyes, and I understood what it meant to try to stop leakage of one's energy.

It was true that I was always ready to argue, but from that moment I began to observe myself like a hawk whenever the desire seized me to argue about anything, right or wrong. This was one of the very first efforts that eventually began to produce certain changes in my whole attitude toward myself and toward life.

• • •

There were a few among us who resented his statement that "man has no permanent 'I.'" When he first said this to us, he made a simple diagram containing many squares into each one of which he wrote the word 'I.'

"Every thought, every desire, every opinion is a different 'I,'" he said. "Man is not one, but many."

Just as he stated it, I understood it well enough. My personal observations of myself were sufficient proof of the validity of his words. I was not the same person for long during any short period of a single day; I changed like a chameleon.

There were times when I was even amused to see how my viewpoint and interests were at such variance with my actions. Things that I had not noticed previously became clear to me, and for that reason I found nothing to object to in what he said. I knew how I became involved in things which I later found I had no desire to do; how I said things to which I later objected; how I laughed at situations that subsequently brought tears to my eyes. I had seen all this in myself, and thought that the whole thing was topsy-turvy. When he spoke of the many 'I's' in man, I realized those 'I's' were responsible for the changes I had seen in myself and I felt reassured. I realized that others had felt the same way I did, and that somehow there was a way out of this maze.

"Sometimes an 'I' in us takes upon itself a commitment about which the other 'I's' know nothing," he would say. "Then, when the time comes to pay, other innocent 'I's' may have to

bear the burden. Every 'I' is caliph for an hour."

"How does one solve this problem?" I asked.

"By becoming One, the Man of Unity," he answered.

I repeat that these things are as I understood him to say them. I was not present when Mr. Ouspensky received the teaching from Mr. Gurdjieff. Except for a few disconnected chapters here and there, he had not even read—to the New York group in which I worked—from *In Search of the Miraculous* to which he would refer as "Fragments of an Unknown Teaching."

But what is here written is what I understood, and what became mine in that sense. It seeped into me, and was assimilated by that which was essentially myself. And, I repeat, it is my understanding that every one in the work must reconstruct what he received as he understood it or thought he understood it. I am merely following the example already set by others from our ranks who, although far better prepared than myself, received exactly the same impact from their meeting with these two remarkable men, Mr. Gurdjieff and Mr. Ouspensky.

In any event, Mr. Ouspensky always lost grace with people who did not care to understand him on his own terms, because when anyone stated, "You said last week. . ." he invariably interrupted, "You understood me to say last week."

This attitude was ingrained into us. At the time I failed to see the reason for his insistence, for his making us start sentence after sentence all over again whenever we stated that he or anybody else had said this or that.

"I understood you to say," he would have us repeat; or, "I understood them to say. . ."

In later years, after Mr. Gurdjieff had been in New York and departed, when I earnestly began group work in the manner prescribed by him and followed by those who had been in training at Prieuré and in Paris with him, it became very clear to me why it is that one cannot say at any time of anyone, "He said this, or he said that."

It is not possible, because impartial self-observation will show that each one of us hears in his own way. Most of the time one's mind is elsewhere when people talk, and one only gets snatches of their conversation which one subsequently interprets in one's own terms. I know from personal experience that these terms can be far from what the speaker had in mind, far from what

he said, so that one is frequently aghast to hear accounts of the words or actions of others which are in many instances not only different but entirely opposite to what one thought or imagined they were expressing at the time. Unless one remembers the real words that were spoken, the circumstances that prevailed when they were uttered, one may become utterly mixed up.

It is an everyday occurrence. There is nothing surprising about it. Observing myself impartially, I have caught myself blandly smiling while some person in whom I had no particular interest spoke while I followed my own train of thought and was so far away from the spot that I barely heard the ends of sentences; little more than a word here and there.

This is not the only way to misunderstand. There are still worse ones, such as when we quote verbatim words that we really heard but misinterpreted, assuming that they meant what we thought and not what they were meant to say. This creates horrible deadlocks in which everyone is equally innocent and sincere.

Again, people in my group came to the conclusion that this was in itself a valid reason for us to be asked in the Work to learn its vocabulary, and to use it in our dealings with one another and with others in the Work. We found it a way to insure understanding at least on the Work subjects of which we spoke. We actually realized that the risk of misinterpretation could not be discarded, and that all we were in a position to say at any time was:

"I understood you to say . . ."

* * *

When Mr. Ouspensky spoke to us about the Law of 3 and the Law of 7, I understood him to say that according to the System these are the two great basic cosmic laws that govern everything that exists, seen as well as unseen, and that the Law of 3 constantly manifests in 3 forces which, in System vocabulary, are known as the active force, the passive force, and the neutralizing force, always present at all levels of manifestation.

"We are third force blind," I recall Mr. Ouspensky saying, "but it is possible to see the result of the other two forces in action. The third force," he added, "is also known as the Holy

Force, the Reconciling Force, the Force through which the Holy Spirit works."

Referring to the Law of 7, he mentioned that the musical octave had been devised by an old school to embody it and that the octave had not been used for its present musical purposes until a much later date.

"Together with the Law of 3, the Law of 7 governs manifestation in every plane," I understood him to say.

My understanding from his further explanations was that in the Law of 7 at given intervals, to which he referred as missing semitones, there occurs a discontinuation in the rate of growth of the frequency of vibrations, then vibrations become faster or slow down, and the flow of energy may change from its original direction unless a "shock" is applied to prevent deviation.

"Is it possible to recognize the intervals in our activities?" someone asked Mr. Ouspensky.

"These points are predictable," was his answer, "but we must learn to recognize them."

Other questions followed, and his answers brought to light the importance, when we work for an aim and wish to reach a goal, a destination at whatever level, to try to learn to "feel" the discontinuation or lowering of vibrations as it occurs in order to exert more efforts to provide the "shock" that will keep our activity octaves from deviating when we reach these intervals, particularly in ascending octaves where the passage from FA to SOL is the most difficult.

"What makes the MI/FA interval more difficult than the SI/DO interval?" he was asked.

"The SI/DO interval is filled by the Will of the Absolute," he replied.

During one of his talks on this subject Mr. Ouspensky mentioned the fact that our difficulties usually originate from our failure to make steady efforts and, as a result of this, our lives are nothing but one trail of unfinished octaves after another.

"How can we keep our Work Octave going straight?"

This was what most of us were eager to know.

He told us, "Try to provide the 'shock' that is necessary."

"How is it done?" everyone wondered.

"Ahhh. . .!" was all he answered.

"But what is the origin of the 'shocks' that cause octaves to

deviate?" A few persons asked this question.

He said, "Shocks come from other octaves traveling in the same direction as well as in other different directions."

Then Mr. Ouspensky gave us a diagram to illustrate the manner in which vibrations increase and decrease, and explained the reason why octaves so repeatedly return to their starting point.

It would be presumptuous on my part to speak at greater length on these talks or to give diagrams "as though I knew" everything Mr. Ouspensky told us about them. I certainly do not know. I have a feeling of understanding for myself, that is all. System concepts must be presented in very exact terms, and all this information may be had by referring to the books that came later. At the time of which I speak here, Mr. Ouspensky's book, *In Search of the Miraculous*, had not yet been published; nor were there available—at least not to us—any other books regarding Mr. Gurdjieff's ideas.

So far as I was concerned, I had never heard anything at all about the work that Mr. Ouspensky, Mr. Orage, and others had done with Mr. Gurdjieff, of whose existence I was entirely unaware. I knew nothing about the "STOPS!" which he had called in working with them, of the manner in which they had all worked together. Much later I came to learn of these stops, and associated the idea of "STOPS" with the shocks needed to prevent the flow of energy from deviating in my personal Work Octave.

When we, in our small group, worked with Mr. Ouspensky there were a handful of persons like myself who were hearing these explanations about the two great cosmic laws for the first time. There were a few others who knew more about it, and some of them said that this statement was entirely unscientific. I knew nothing about the scientific or unscientific value of this statement. However, it so happened that I was reading a book at the time in which there were words to the effect that "...electricity encounters great resistance at ordinary atmospheric pressure, but a lowering of resistance, such as can be produced by means of a flash of lightning or a high voltage arc, makes it possible for a current of lower voltage to flow."

This was a most fortunate coincidence for me, although I cannot explain just why to this very day. Whatever was the

reason that I received a flash of understanding from these words it enabled me to relate the "discontinuation of vibrations" in the Law of 7, and made it quite clear that "shocks" were most valuable in my Work Octave. I understood clearly, but only for myself alone as I cannot understand for anyone else. As a result, having fully realized my inability to observe the flow of energy in my Work Octave and not knowing how to try to apply a shock to myself when necessary, I discovered a promise, rich and appealing to me, in the general provision of shocks that we find in the Work. In this manner I was prepared, from the very beginning, to welcome gladly verbal or any other kind of blows that came my way in working with others, and to accept them with utmost equanimity actually harboring an inner feeling of gratitude towards those in a position to apply these "shocks" when they proceeded to do so, involving me in it, consciously or unconsciously.

There were a great many apparently unsatisfactory things in Group Work which might easily have stopped me had not this occurrence, so fortunate for me, taken place very early in my study of System ideas. Once having assimilated the concept of "shocks" to my full personal satisfaction, there was nothing from which I could not profit in this respect—nothing at all.

And so by the time Mr. Gurdjieff made his luminous appearance in New York years later, and with the assistance of his original group pupils who helped him to pass his Work on to others, began seasoning our Work efforts every now and then with "shocks" of some kind or another, I did not take them as disagreeable manifestations on the part of others, or as unpleasant life situations, but welcomed them happily as the very thing that I needed to prevent eventual deviations in the direction of my Work Aim efforts.

* * *

Among us there were many persons interested in "meditation." They had to have their meditation, and objected to the fact that Mr. Ouspensky did not recommend it. On a certain occasion he had told them that their "meditation" was useless. One or two persons protested, and asked him why it was that all other systems recommended meditation.

He answered, "What other systems? I speak only of this system.

Meditate, if you know what it means. Meditate, if you know how to do it."

"Are we not here to be taught how to do it?" asked one of the meditation adepts.

"No," he answered. "We are here to learn about our machine and to try to awaken."

"But what is wrong with meditation?" asked someone else.

"Did I say there is something wrong?" Mr. Ouspensky looked around, innocently, then went on, "I say we, here, do not speak of meditation. For us, meditation is imagination. Enough imagination in us as it is, without adding meditation. We must try to awaken first."

Strangely enough these were the very persons who never seemed to give serious thought to the value of the tools that he tried to put in our hands to help us attain the end in which they were apparently interested.

As for myself, "long thinking" served my purpose well enough. With my utter inability to direct my thoughts and attention at will, this was about the level best I could do. And I had indeed a great many subjects from which to select my long thoughts. Every day I would take a different Work concept and try to understand it, and to prepare questions about it. What does it mean that I cannot do? What does it mean that I do not know how to exert efforts without help? What is my understanding of the Ray of Creation? Of the Lateral Octave? Of the Chemical Laboratory? Where do I stand in relation to these ideas that I heard at the lectures, and which I use as impressions giving me food for thought and an opportunity to direct my attention? The longer the thought, the more time I devoted to it, the more phases of the idea opened before me, the more connections I found in it, the greater my gain in understanding. Consequently the greater the knowledge that I accumulated for myself at my level, the more efforts I felt prompted to exert to work on myself. This eventually brought about a certain—even if small—change in my being.

I always found "long thinking" fruitful. One hour of it, daily, over a period of at least six months, insofar as we are personally concerned, and it will soon make itself manifest to us in ways that will leave no room for doubt of its merit. I can think of no better way to pave one's way on the road to "meditation!"

It is said in the Work that the answer to a question is relatively unimportant when it comes from another. It is the question that matters to the person who makes it. Therefore we must have questions: we must ask them for the purpose of receiving information to help us kindle our own fire. Moreover, the Work tells us to question everything, particularly anything that we hear in the Work. To question it in our own minds, to probe into it ourselves, to argue against it if we approve it, for it if we don't. It is the only way to learn to know for ourselves, the only way to learn to live, to love, to understand the Work.

It is the only way, it seems to me, because, as I have seen in my case, it leads away from identification with what one hears and into appreciation of the unity behind all dissimilarities, the truth behind all systems, religious, philosophical, and psychological. This was especially apparent to me with regard to the symbology of the System. It knitted together for me, and wove into a splendid pattern, the wealth of helpful ideas that may also be found elsewhere, in ways followed by other types of man, to which we have little access without the Work key that opens these treasure chests.

This is why I feel that our System alone, in this respect, prepares its people in such a way that conditioning of the "prodigal" is inevitable. Jew, Christian, Moslem, whatever, in each one the heart may bloom as the mind opens to see the value of the faith that he was taught in the cradle, the faith which perhaps he left of his own accord in rebellion. Now he receives the traditional ring because now he knows, he understands, and he accepts what he had opposed since, as the Work itself tells us, "to understand is to accept."

And here, indeed, is some more food for long thinking. What does it mean that to understand is to accept?

I have already said that when I first came into the Work I agreed to set aside things I did not understand until I had enough material to deal with them in my thoughts. I have observed that it is important to distinguish between this attitude, and an altogether rapid tendency, when we first meet the Work, to put aside the things that are not understood, telling ourselves that we may omit them because they have no actual bearing on our principal interest. I feel that this tendency is undesirable because it may hinder "long thinking." We are too prompt to

stop exerting the effort to think when things are difficult. I understood Mr. Ouspensky to say that this is very detrimental to understanding. Therefore I try to take hold of such things as baffle me mentally and wonder about their meaning, giving them a chance to become clearer by nursing them in my thoughts. When taken as a subject for "long thinking," some of these difficult ideas have been most beneficial to me.

We were told time and again by Mr. Ouspensky that in this Work, words and expressions are used in a manner peculiar to themselves; it is imperative to understand System vocabulary, since without understanding the possibilities of this new language, vast in its importance, it is not really possible to come to terms with ourselves.

His words were very true. It took me a period of years clearly to feel and understand them. And when I did, they opened my inner doors to let in such a rush of light that it was fairly dazzling in its intensity. It dispelled my darkness of years before, and for years ahead!

Yet attacks on the Work are constant, not only by those who join and leave of their own accord because they have failed to come to terms with themselves but also by those who have only a passing acquaintance with the ideas or none at all, having simply read a book or attended a lecture, or even heard about the Work secondhand.

"What can you expect," they protest with indignation, "of any system that teaches you to work against nature, against God? Of a system that tells you that only a few men can become different beings and make souls for themselves while all others are doomed? Of a system that refuses to define its terms, yet states them so definitively?" And so on ad nauseam.

It is not the purpose of our Work to offer exact definitions. It is different. We are told this truth from the very beginning. Neither definitions nor explanations will take us where we want to go in the particular way that we call the Fourth Way.

We are given ideas as mental food. This is the only purpose they are meant to serve, since food is what we all need to help us grow and, therefore, have the possibility of a change in being. No amount of chewing of this kind of food by another will be of use to us. Indeed, what would be the System's value to us if it were to give us detailed instructions and definitions of the pro-

positions offered us, and deprive us thereby of the opportunity to use our own efforts to understand them through our own sweat and struggle, to assimilate them and to make them an integral part of ourselves through our own choice?

All these questions were tremendously important to me. And this is the reason why I speak of them here, and of my personal understanding of the statements made in the Work.

When I first heard this statement, that our Work was "Work against Nature, against God" my immediate reaction was, "By their fruit shall ye know them."

Indeed, how could anyone say this about the Work that makes "Balanced Man" out of a machine like me; the Work that gives wings to thought, aim to desire, sanctity to the body; the Work that purifies emotions and awakens conscience? How, indeed! Unless, of course, it involved the new language that we were learning to use: entirely new in meaning, in scope, in everything. If so, what would this statement mean? How would I reconcile it with the fruit of the Work?

My answer came more from the heart than from long thinking: the Creator manifests in His creation; the Absolute, All Worlds, All Suns, everything visible and invisible. . . everything flowing out of Him. . . out of Him. . . away from Him, in an outer direction. What is the Ray of Creation if not a diagram of His emanations? And the Lateral Octave. . . still descending, descending; when man finds his place in this latter, and he feels the wish to turn away from the outer to the inner, away from the flow of manifestation, does he not turn against the current, and thus toward God—in the reverse direction that leads to Him through the ascending octave, as Jacob did ascend the ladder that he saw in his dream?

Isn't this a movement in the direction against the natural order of things? Is it not turning to face against God, in order to go toward Him, to reach Him?

This realization gave me much inner warmth. Years later, when Mr. Gurdjieff arrived and I heard about the Law of Otherwise, this memory came like a flood of light to confirm my understanding of the former shocking words.

It had been at this point that the Ray of Creation had become personal, insofar as the Lateral Octave and my personal octave were concerned. The ray of light that struck me carried me

along with it as it traveled, and I had a pictorial view of the wealth of meaning that it covered. My mind worked rapidly, intensely; my heart burst into feelings of a quality that turned the light away from my ordinary life, and it was possible for me to separate from myself, to see myself at the turning point, reversing the movement of my descending ray at the point of return, turning contrary to the general direction of my life to go—against God—to God.

How clear it became to me that this "against," so strongly held by many against our Work, was exactly the point of excellence at which man turns from the outer turmoil of his existence to face his Creator! The word did not mean "in hostility to," as commonly assumed, but just the reverse, "in the direction toward!"

Of course the statement had been a shock when I first heard it. And it gave me my first real taste of the struggle with "shocks," those important tools used in our Work to jolt us out of our sleep and help us, momentarily, to open our eyes and to know that we are slumbering—or even to foster in us nightmares that will force us to struggle hard to awaken.

Shocks are a special characteristic feature of our System: one that calls for efforts to do external considering, to be courageous, to try to be present, to hold on to all the good will that we may manage to muster.

It would be pointless for me to speak any more about shocks. If they could be defined, they would be shocks no longer. They must remain "something unexpected," to throw one off the track, to puzzle, baffle, annoy, surprise, perhaps even to please the recipient.

Shocks may not be applied by anyone unless he knows what he is doing and the reason for it. Nor can anyone successfully "shock" himself, because the element of surprise would necessarily be missing in self-application. A shock, to be successful, must come from a person who knows and, at least at the moment, is relatively conscious; a person who has a knowledge of types, who can foresee and be ready to meet any number of consequences simultaneously. "Shocks" are most useful in Group Work, and will avail nothing to those who do not know how to use the energy thereby created and released.

I can say from personal experience that "shocks" are di-

rectly felt by every nerve in one's being, and they affect the machine like a bolt of lightning that strikes suddenly.

An intentionally applied shock may become a rich source of the kind of fuel needed to neutralize the life shocks that plague one's experience in the guise of untoward situations and events of all sorts. For, once we have learned to "place" our scant provender of consciousness beyond the point of disruption when these "Work" shocks confront us, we are well prepared nimbly to face life with the certainty that no strength shall be lacking to bear the unexpected, to understand that which is baffling, to adjust to all circumstances without any great loss of inner balance. In a word:

"To work on oneself."

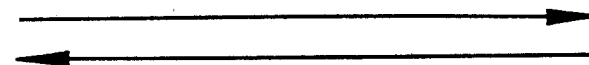
CHAPTER 3

From the beginning Mr. Ouspensky made it clear to us that attention is our most precious energy, and that the study of attention in ourselves is of primordial importance in our work.

I understood him to say that attention does not always manifest at a single level because it varies according to the center from which it springs, and there are different kinds of attention.

"We study intentional attention," he said, and gave us as a task to voice our observations on the reason why we lost the thread of our presence so quickly, even when we were exerting our best efforts to hold on to it while engaged in any activity.

Several of us said we found it difficult to try to remember ourselves at the same time that we paid attention to whatever was happening around us. He told us that we must struggle to practice "dividing attention," that is, simultaneously to see the direction into which our attention flowed and ourselves as the source of this attention. To explain this he drew a double arrow for us.



"Divided attention deepens your feeling of presence," he said. "It makes observation less subjective."

Many persons in my group felt that it was possible for them to direct their attention at will, and to hold it for as long as they wished on whatever they were interested in. As for myself, my observation was that while I could give undivided attention to whatever attracted me at a given moment I usually became lost in it; moreover, it was not possible for me to direct my attention to things that had no special appeal for me and to hold it centered on them for any length of time.

According to my understanding, Mr. Ouspensky explained to us that although ordinary man has no control over his attention,

he is able to use some of the energy that passes for it and of which he has quite enough for everyday purposes.

"Try to trace the source of your attention," he told us, adding almost inaudibly, "you must learn to use it. It can be done."

Then he explained that when the mind is freely roaming from one subject to the other, and cannot be kept on one track, attention is at its mechanical best, primarily lodged in moving center. When the subject of our attention fascinates us, we are dealing with emotional attention and generally become lost in it; but when we have to struggle to direct our attention toward a particular subject—when we must mentally run after it to bring it back to whatever it may be that we wish to consider, exercising real effort to hold it where we want it—then we are in the intellectual part of our centers.

I understood him to say that the kind of attention to which the double arrow refers is attention directed by one's will to the object under observation and at the same time directed toward oneself. This is intentional attention, a very different kind of attention, he told us. It is the kind of attention we must exert every effort to apply, particularly in relation to our work on ourselves, since divided attention is what we need for our work. It involves an effort to self-remember, keeping part of our attention on ourselves at the same time that it flows to something else taking place outside or inside ourselves. For instance, someone is talking to me, and I am attentive to what I am being told, and simultaneously attentive to myself, listening. This is division of attention.

"Do not feel free to believe everything I tell you," insisted Mr. Ouspensky. "You must think for yourselves. You must find out for yourselves if I tell you the truth."

My attempts to study attention as it manifested in me showed me how right he was in everything he had told us. Except for cases where the subject attracted me so much that it occupied all my thoughts, I found that my attention wavered, tracing zigzag lines as it leaped from this to that subject. All the will I thought I possessed proved to be like putty under the influence of my attention and its whims, and I saw that my will, itself, was conditioned by my likes and dislikes, my wish to do this or the other thing, but that it abandoned me when I least expected

it. And as far as being centered in myself, this never took place unless I made an effort to make it happen. But even so, the kind of attention that I gave out was not under my direction: rather, I was at its command.

It is not difficult to understand that in observing anything it is possible to divide the attention given to it into two parts, merely by thinking that "this is I, I, here; that is that, there." But this simultaneous realization is not simple to achieve in practice. On my part, my experiments become easier when my efforts to bring about this division of attention takes place at the moment that an ordinary life impression arouses some sort of emotion in me. It doesn't matter what kind of emotion: anger, fear, displeasure, boredom, surprise, pleasure, curiosity—anything. So long as it is an impression when IT (whatever angered, frightened, displeased, bored, surprised, pleased me, or made me curious) is being observed. It is something quite simple, just as it sounds, but in actual practice, I never find it to be so, especially if anything happens in my immediate surroundings to cause me to move even slightly while I observe. I find it very useful to my work to try this exercise under different conditions.

This aspect of the Work, too, is different from anything else in the sense that generally people lay emphasis on the action that is performed giving it most value; that is, the nature of the action and how it is performed. Not so in our Work. The action may be anything, but it is just as valid. Picking up a simple pebble or solving a complicated problem, the value lies in the kind of attention exerted while the action takes place, the depth of the attention while it is being held divided, its length, too, that is, how long was it possible to maintain it knowing that I was maintaining it. Moreover, how frequently does this happen? Is it only every once in a great while, or every day, or many times a day? One does not have to achieve feats of will power or engage in super efforts, to do original, worthwhile, important things. Any simple thing will do. There is not a single situation that may not serve our purpose. Nothing is less important or more important; the value is not in what is being done but in HOW it is taking place! Where is my attention? How deep is it? How long does it last? Is it steadily divided? If the answer is "yes," I am succeeding; if "no," I am not.

I can say nothing more about this. Attention must be studied in oneself; it is something with which to experiment personally. And since each person is different each one may have his own problem to face, his own discoveries to make in this connection.

Actually I am my attention. Wherever it is, I am lost in it. And the extent of the task involved in trying to direct it, to hold it wherever I wish it to be, is gigantic. Add the effort to divide the attention, and my task becomes colossal.

Apart from the fact that man is asleep, I understood Mr. Ouspensky to say, people do not understand one another—not only because each person speaks his own language and assumes that others understand it as well, but because we do not generally hear what others are saying even when it seems that we are following the conversation. It is usually the case that we listen to our own selves talk and hardly know what others are trying to tell us before we have our own answers ready to engage in any argument or conversation.

Mr. Ouspensky suggested that each one of us make a dictionary of System terms well known to himself or herself. But he advised us not to write anything down to describe these terms.

We were merely to think alphabetically, taking one word at a time from among those we had heard and which actually meant something to us in such a way that we would have no hesitancy in explaining what we understood by it if we were called upon to do so.

Sometime later he suggested to some of us to exchange words from our vocabulary after having given them thought and reached our own understanding of these terms well known to the members of this particular group. In this manner we soon found out who had worked at this task; also, to our surprise, almost everyone of us had the same understanding and the same definition for the words. It had not always been so. We recalled how, at a very early general meeting, someone had asked whether the "soul" was accepted in the System.

"Soul? What means soul?" asked Mr. Ouspensky, as though he had never heard this word before.

And then each one had tried hard to explain what the soul was, but no one had given the same explanation. Each one understood and defined it differently.

"Write it down on paper," he told us.

Now this was not the case. When the word "soul" came up everyone gave it its meaning **FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE SYSTEM**: as something existing in all living things in the Organic World, which goes to feed the Moon at the death of the individual, whether it be a plant, an insect, an animal or a man. That something, the electric charge in each living thing, is released at death and serves to feed the Moon. Evidently this was what each one of us had understood.

I can well remember the shock that these words gave me when I first heard them. Fortunately, they must have semi-awakened me. Not only can I still see myself as I sat open-mouthed, but I can even sense the eloquent expression of incredulity in my eyes. I understood that he was referring to the soul of which religion speaks, and this would have been a shock beyond my endurance had I not been engaged in such mental tours of unaccustomed thinking, in such efforts to remember myself prior to being faced with this statement, that when the words came to my ears and, with them, the implication of their surface meaning, I knew instinctively that this must be understood otherwise—perhaps in a way about which I had not yet been told, which was the reason its meaning escaped me now and I must be patient and I must wait.

This wealth of new thoughts gradually evoked in me the feelings of gratitude and admiration as they came in constant succession, one more challenging than the other, each drawing from me gasps of wonder and amazement as I realized—and as I have been realizing ever since—the scope, the magnitude, as well as the deep meaning of all the things that I heard.

There was no particular mental resistance on my part to Mr. Ouspensky's assertions. On the other hand, I had great emotional resistance to overcome; I felt that his work was dangerous, that peril lurked invisibly, that I must be careful. It was a struggle for me to go on. But my mind was having its long-delayed holiday and it struck back at my emotions, engaging them in so terrific a battle that I came out of it all the wiser and stronger in understanding.

Mr. Ouspensky fanned my struggle. "Doubt," he kept advising me, "doubt everything you hear, particularly what I myself tell you."

And today, as I witness the incredulity and the repugnance

expressed by many persons when they hear this concept for the first time, their rebellion against the thought of being "eaten" by the Moon, the memory of my own first impact returns to me together with some of the questions that came up at the time and the words I understood Mr. Ouspensky to speak in this respect.

He was asked, "When you say that the Moon feeds on organic life, does it mean that rays from the earth have to pass through organic life to reach the moon?"

"No, there is a much closer connection," he said.

And then, in answer to the very many questions that this statement brought, he spoke at length and said, as I understood it, that when organic life is living on the earth it emits some form of radiations but that at death its "soul" goes to the Moon—that the Moon is like a big electromagnet that attracts it.

"And what do the souls do when they get to the Moon?" asked a very timid voice in an almost inaudible tone.

He answered the question.

"They occupy some place between mineral and plant," he said.

"What can souls do to avoid going to the Moon?" inquired someone else.

"But who can do? We cannot deprive the Moon of this energy because the Ray of Creation will collapse." And he added that it is in this way that the Moon grows, and that among a few other theories about the Moon there was this one—according to which the Moon can evolve and become like the Earth.

It was explained that in this Work the "soul" represents life energy and that the soul, in this sense, stands for the life principle and nothing else. Mr. Ouspensky said that this idea of going to the moon at death applies to the soul alone and does not affect consciousness; that the life principle, which is all that is involved, has nothing to do with the possibility of a change in being which involves understanding and consciousness.

"Then, what is the soul?" he was asked.

"I just said," he answered.

But after a short pause, contrary to his policy of avoiding explanations after he had already given information about any of his statements, he told us that in this System "soul" is

only one kind of energy and that Essence, as part of being is probably susceptible of development, that it can change and attain higher levels through conscious effort and with help.

Someone said: "You mention efforts and help—efforts one can exert oneself . . ."

"No, no, you cannot," he interrupted. "It must be shown to you when to make effort, how to make effort. Man cannot exert efforts by himself. He must be shown how to make them."

"Is that why schools are needed?" came another question.

There was no answer.

"How does a group become a school?" insisted the same person.

"By working," he said.

"Is becoming a school a matter of attitude?" she asked.

"No. It is a matter of work, not attitude."

"Is the physical appearance of a school important, or is it only a matter of the amount of work we put into it?" asked someone else.

"Physical appearance means nothing," he told us.

"When one thinks about doing group work, how can one tell whether one is thinking or going in for imagination?"

To this question he said that thinking needs effort, whereas imagination is just pleasure.

"Think, think," he admonished as usual.

This talk gave us a great deal of material for work. Mr. Ouspensky gave us the task to try to distinguish between what is and what is not self-remembering.

"Necessary to learn to think," he said. "Just thinking about this is very useful. It is a way to acquire better control of the machine."

He placed much emphasis on the fact that self-remembering starts exactly with the realization that one does not remember, and that the deeper this realization goes the more it becomes possible to learn to self-remember. If, in five years, one succeeded in remembering himself for five minutes, it could be considered a wonderful result, he said.

"Oh, but this is hardly any result!" protested someone in our group.

"In this System, we don't look for results. We have to work, work, and work. Must not expect results. They may surprise

you if you don't expect them," he said. "Nowadays," Mr. Ouspensky added, "people hear about the fact that man does not remember himself, almost the moment they come into the Work." But he himself did not hear about it until he had been studying the System for at least two years. When he heard it, it surprised him exceedingly that all European thinkers had missed the point.

"The man who can remember himself knows what he wants," he told us.

"But just what does self-remembering embrace, how does one think about it?" he was asked.

"Self-remembering means just to remember 'I am here. I am myself and nobody else. I am here and nowhere else,' without thinking of someone or of something else. This is trying to self-remember. When you can do it for two minutes, after many months have elapsed, it means that a great many efforts were put into work on yourself."

That evening I understood him to tell us that most mechanical laws are based on the fact that man does not remember himself, and when he succeeds in remembering then he will be able to escape at least some of these mechanical laws.

"Does one stop thought in order to learn to remember oneself?" questioned another person.

"No" was the answer. "To stop thought means only to try to stop thinking for two or three minutes at a time. This is all, nothing else. Perhaps in three hundred years you will see the wish materialize if you want results. But the practice, without expectations, may bring something more quickly. No guarantee."

Mr. Ouspensky added that to put anything else into the purpose of trying to stop thoughts, some aim other than just trying to stop thoughts, would surely spoil everything. There is an almost uncontrollable function represented by the flow of thinking in man; the aim in trying to stop thought is to try not to allow the current of thought to carry us away, as it always happens even when we are thinking about self-remembering.

"Don't embroider on the idea," he cautioned.

A young man stated that in trying to stop thoughts he had observed changes in his breathing rhythm.

"Leave breathing alone," he advised us.

"But in doing physical work, wouldn't we be depleted of

energy unless we knew how to breathe correctly?" insisted the same person.

"Physical work does not deplete you of energy. It gives you energy," he was told. "When you do physical work you breathe correctly. If you don't, you die."

"If we try to observe ourselves trying to stop thoughts, will it be helpful?" asked another man. Mr. Ouspensky answered, "But what does trying to stop thought mean? It means not thinking. The aim in this case is not to observe but to stop thoughts."

"But will trying to stop thoughts lead to self-remembering?" asked someone else.

Mr. Ouspensky answered that what leads to self-remembering is never put into words. Then he was asked whether we must remember ourselves to get out of "prison," and he said that he thought that the chief part of "prison" is that we don't remember ourselves.

"Only very few of those who hear about self-remembering think of it," he told us. "That is what creates a difference among people. One thinks one is self-remembering and may be deceiving oneself, but even thinking about it can be useful, what it means to have it and not to have it."

"Why is physical work of more value when done in an organized way, with others, than when carried on at home as an individual?" a lady wanted to know.

"Because we are naturally lazy. Have you already done organized work with others?" he asked her.

The answer was no.

He said, "When you have done it, we will talk about it."

There were some other persons who showed interest in knowing why physical work is recommended by the System. Mr. Ouspensky said that, among other things, it made people breathe normally because one cannot do heavy work for any length of time without breathing properly; physical work improved the activity of the centers, particularly making breathing normal. He added that there are schools of organized work which are based on this; but in our System, ordinary breathing is enough.

Moreover, I understood him to say that each type has its own breathing problems and that a teacher must be very familiar with types in order to watch the persons because otherwise harm

may come through wrong breathing methods—mostly because the instinctive center is quite able to do it itself and any interference with it may throw it out of gear, impairing a man's health through his breathing.

"Earlier this evening," said someone at the back of the room, "I understood you to say that external considering is one of the things needed to prepare the soil for self-remembering. "What is external considering?"

"A form of self-remembering," he replied.

"And how does trying to stop the expression of negative emotions help to self-remember?" asked another person.

"Self observation, trying not to express negative emotions, trying to do external considering—this is spadework required before self-remembering can be of any value to us." He added, smiling, "Also asking practical questions. Try, and you will see. The more negative emotions, the less energy for self-remembering."

When he began his lectures Mr. Ouspensky acquainted us with the fact that the System calls for Work to be done simultaneously along three different lines: 1) on oneself; 2) with others in the Work; and 3) for the Work.

In my particular group no difficulty ever arose in understanding the need to work on oneself, or even the need to work for the Work itself. But it was not so easy for some to accept the need for working with others. Many questioned: why would ordinary work done together—such as sewing, cooking, dish washing, cleaning, working in the fields, and innumerable other chores and manual labor—assume a special aspect if done with members of the group or people in the Work, yet be divested of this merit if done at home or with one's friends without any special purpose other than do the work.

Mr. Ouspensky most frequently answered questions of this nature with the admonition, "Try to observe. Observe."

Naturally, I tried hard to observe. In this everyday procedure I found, for myself, that it is in working with others, for the sake of the Work, that one can come to a full realization of one's utter mechanicalness in daily ordinary life reactions. And I found, also, something which was as true when I first began to work as it is now, after many years of effort in this direction, namely, on these blessed occasions everybody seems to get into

everybody else's way. Resentment of authority, generally expressed in dissatisfaction with our own life conditions and with those who surround us, comes at this time so blatantly to the fore that it is impossible to avoid seeing and understanding one's stupidity. Irrespective of how long one may have been doing this line of the Work, how deeply interested in working on oneself one may be, how rooted the brotherly spirit prevailing among those working together as a group is—there is always the possibility of falling into temptation and blaming others for things that go wrong, the tendency to report on others indirectly by referring to the manner in which they worked in order to justify one's own failure to work properly on oneself.

There is, too, the feeling of rebellion against obedience, the readiness to blame the person in charge of the group who was responsible for the work of the day, for having been too demanding, or not enough so, for not having noticed this or done that. Naturally, when individuals are trying to work on themselves these observations help them to progress on the path to self-knowledge and afford them many opportunities to see what goes on in their inner world, and to exert efforts to try to self-remember in unusual circumstances. Later, there follows an exchange of experiences and observations after having done group work together, usually at a meeting with other group members, under one's leader. Thus the activities yield still greater riches, and we have opportunities to see that we merely imagine ourselves to be tolerant, patient, obedient, intelligent, and understanding.

And, best of all, there is always someone in the group, some person in whom the Holy Spirit intuitively works, who, from among all possibilities present in unpleasant situations, always selects the finest, the one that alone will further everybody's work efforts. These gifted people, when pushed or frowned upon, on witnessing unbecoming actions or attitudes on the part of others—possibly even group leaders—will never fail to come forth with the most reassuring and strengthening reports on their personal reactions to such untoward manifestations of which they never speak until after someone has brought them to the limelight.

We hear from them that they thought these disagreeable occurrences were intentional; they wondered whether possibly

those responsible for the unpleasantness had been instructed to try the patience of the others; that a feeling of gratitude had warmed their hearts, and helped them to see the force of the Work through these very things; that they had realized the impossibility of receiving so much, unless circumstances like these were artificially created for their benefit so as to tax their understanding and help them grow in wisdom; and that this feeling of gratitude had bloomed into love for those who had tried to be contrary or difficult or annoying in an effort to help them work on themselves.

Such a reaction is a great blessing because things are what one makes of them. Once we have gained the power to see beyond appearances, the power to refrain from passing hasty judgment, we are well along the way to stop the leak of the precious energy that we so badly need to carry on our work, and to try to understand the Law of Otherwise and, therefore, benefit by it.

Mr. Ouspensky never gave a name to this law within my hearing. But he taught us to recognize its value, to know its taste, and he strengthened us by making us live by it long before I, for one, came to know it for what it was—the hub of Mr. Gurdjieff's method of teaching.

After all these years of fruitful association with System ideas I can say for myself that their magic power to promote change in being is surpassed only by the manner in which Mr. Gurdjieff and the Ouspenskys taught them. For me, the transforming power lies particularly in this method of teaching, and this method is based to a very large extent on the Law of Otherwise.

In this System weakness is eliminated, also imagination, and the realization comes that no number of excellent books, no genuine flashes of illumination will help me, an ordinary man, to awaken from my sleep unless I exert efforts to work on myself, efforts to learn and to try to be in order to understand. These efforts mean sacrifice of time, of comfort, of preferences, of the pleasant, of the habitual; but through them one learns, begins to understand and to work in the direction which Mr. Ouspensky suggested when he said that, "Man must first of all acquire that which he thinks he possesses and does not possess, such as consciousness, conscience, will, the ability to do, knowledge, being, understanding."

Some of the members of my group found the idea that "man cannot do" upsetting.

"What hope is there for us if nothing can be done?" they asked.

In any event, nobody really believed it and, perhaps, this is the reason why, almost without exception, when we first begin to attend readings or meetings, one of the first things we wish to know is, "Must I do this, or must I refrain from doing that?" We assume that it is just as easily done as said. The answer, invariably, is, "Man cannot do."

Another question of this kind referred to men of higher levels of being: number 5, number 6, number 7. It was asked very frequently, "Must one be able to be conscious of oneself always in order to become a higher man?"

So far as I remember, Mr. Ouspensky's answer did not change.

"I am not a higher man. I cannot know the conditions of his consciousness and its permanence. We speak only of man number 1, number 2, number 3, like ourselves. Possibly of man number 4."

"Always" is, of course, a formative approach to a question. Nothing happens "always"; things change from one minute to another, and we ourselves are not always the same person—thanks to the full array of interchangeable "I's" in us. What "always" may mean to a higher man we simply cannot know since we do not share his being. Certainly, for us, it is not possible to be conscious always or we would be very close to reaching the goal that we pursue in our Work. Moreover, before going anywhere, it is imperative to take the first step, and our first step is very far removed from this dream state of "always" consciousness. First things come first.

Our Work is very practical Work, and in this case it means that we must, first of all, try to observe ourselves closely in order to become familiar with the state of deep sleep in which we exist. When we have seen our state of identification with everything that surrounds us, we understand how true it is that we "cannot do." To accept this, mentally, is one thing; to know it through one's own realization and experience, is another. This is the first step. Until the full import of this realization sinks way down into the depths of our being we are in the same position as people who wish to know what a fruit tastes like but have not

sunk their teeth into it in order personally to undergo what is, in every respect, a nontransferable experience.

So far as I can recall, Mr. Ouspensky was, or seemed to be severe when these questions arose.

"In what way would it help your work on yourself to know this?" he would invariably ask back. There were no answers. Then he would add, "Better first to see that we are not conscious now. This is the beginning of real Work."

There were many who resented that. They constantly came back to the same question. It was difficult for all of us to understand that we had already been given as much as we could use at this particular moment for us to work on ourselves and to try to do and to understand. We wanted more and more, especially more instructions 'on 'how to do, what to do, when to do,' and we did not realize that we were not practicing what we had received—that we had not started to work.

Mr. Ouspensky could be very irritating at times when he refused to budge beyond a position he had taken. He never compromised, irrespective of circumstances, unless he thought that he had made a mistake—something that, within my knowledge, very rarely happened.

"But isn't it possible for one to do at least something about this?" persistent members of our group would repeat every now and then.

Once he said, "Yes, if you wish. Try to observe. Find out for yourself that it is true. Perhaps you will find out it is not true in you. I do not know."

"But it is true. I accept it. The question is, what to do about it, how to change?" this person insisted.

"Ah, that is the question," he nodded smiling. "How to change, not what to do about it."

There were frequent dialogues between him and us.

"Well, how to change, then?"

"That is what we are here together to learn. But first we must work."

"Then what must be done is to work. This is already something that one can do."

"You try to be clever. No, seriously, man cannot do. Never forget that. This System says that man, as we are, cannot do. You cannot do, cannot even understand that you cannot do."

"Then how can I work?"

"You cannot work. You do not know how to work. You must learn. Other people know a little about this, they have found a way to work. You must find out from them."

"Are you one of those people?"

"This is for you to answer. Observe, observe."

And yet, this constant refusal of explanations, the knowledge that there was nothing to be done about it, that Mr. Ouspensky would not even say something encouraging that might offer us a ray of hope about being able "to do" or "to change," his passive attitude of resistance finally eventuated in all the richness of understanding, in the change—for there were noticeable changes in one—with which those who held on and continued to work with him undiscouraged were rewarded.

Of course group work is especially helpful in a case like this. One person alone could never undergo all the experiences inherent in so many different situations that arise in living, and fully confirm the fact that we "cannot do." But where there are several persons, each one reporting on a different event, a different observation, sharing personal experiences with one another, there is such a wealth of data and information to be gathered that the things that seem senseless when first heard become so meaningful and full of energy as to spread hope among all.

In my particular case, however, many years were to pass before it became clear to me, from my own understanding and without analysis, that I really cannot do anything. When I saw it I knew that it had not been enough to accept this statement mentally, and I realized what it meant that "one has but one choice." And when this happened there was no contradiction, as there seemed to have been at first.

I found that in accumulating facts for confirming the affirmation that "man cannot do," I had provided myself with a large number of excellent tools that would serve me to exercise the ability to "choose" this or that way, or at least to try so to use them. It became evident to me that it was by choosing to work on myself impartially that these tools had been formed. In trying to learn from others who knew how to use them, I no longer bore the burden of the words "man cannot do," for now I had tools with which to try to learn how to "imitate doing"

into a distant but existing possibility of learning "to be" so as to be in a position "to do." But by this time, the interest in speculating about what it might mean "to do" had disappeared. It was part of the price I had to pay for the tools and for the instruction on how to put them to the proper use.

This "barrier" was one that served to deter many members of our group from going along with Mr. Ouspensky. I refer to this necessity to stop speculating, this absolute necessity to sacrifice imagination and inspirational flights into fantasy and extrasensory ecstasies and so on. For no matter how valid all of these may be they are not *the* tools that we must use in The Fourth Way, which is our way. They may be very good tools, but they are not the tools FOR OUR WAY. Actually, if one has any of them one may possibly have to sacrifice it in order to obtain the everyday tools which are needed in our way. However, the good fortune of anyone thus endowed is indeed great. Those who have visions and hear voices, who see things, and can do automatic writing and all kinds of wonderful things (we, speak of man number 1, man number 2, man number 3; ordinary men like ourselves), what a high price they have to pay, what a tremendous thing to sacrifice for the "pearl of great price" that one seeks in our Work! And since the greater the sacrifice, the greater the reward, a sacrifice of this nature cannot fail to produce a crop of moments rich in opportunities to self-remember, to "do" intentional suffering, to come to terms with oneself.

This brings to my memory a question, also very common among us in those days, namely, "But what is there to sacrifice? I have nothing to sacrifice."

This referred to the statement in the Work that "people who desire to change must sacrifice something very dear to them; sacrifice for a long period of time, although not forever."

"Does it mean to sacrifice one's career, our family, or something of that sort?" asked a few of our members.

"No," answered Mr. Ouspensky. "It means to sacrifice your suffering before you sacrifice anything else. But sacrifice is not necessary always, only at the beginning."

"But I have no special suffering," people insist.

I, too, repeatedly pondered this question. I remember how it baffled me. Where to find my special suffering, since I had not observed that I had any? But years later, after I had been made

to observe many things that occurred during my day, at work or otherwise, I found to my astonishment that I did have a deeply-rooted special "suffering" about which I always complained and to which I always catered. Upon further observation, on questioning others, I found that this was true of all—that we spend hours complaining of this or that, each one with a special "fly in the ointment" to worry about; whether it is the weather, taking it as a personal affront if it rains; if it snows, if it is clear; if it is cold or if it is warm; if the days are short or long; or anything else; or whether those who work with us or for us do as they please and do not follow the pattern we would have them follow; or whether it is food which we do not find to our liking; or because we have nothing new to wear; or have to ride in public conveyances; or because there are too many bosses, or not enough persons to give orders to; or because there are bills to be met; too much or too little work to do. We suffer for innumerable reasons equally superficial if deeply seated, and I was genuinely surprised to find this simple truth about myself.

And then came the dawn. I began to see that failing one great thing to sacrifice, any little thing—taste, comfort, interest, desire—sacrificed now and then as a "conscious effort" to awaken if only for the fleeting moment that it came into my notice, could become in time very helpful by forming heap upon heap of little luminous points of purpose from which many lines can start, at some blessed time, to form the somewhat higher plane that I may succeed in reaching, through my own sincere efforts to work on myself.

I understood exactly the kind of suffering that must be sacrificed, which must be studied in all its ramifications. The energy lost daily as a result of this kind of suffering is one of the main reasons why it is lacking when we try to work at tasks given to us for the sake of helping us to awaken and to remember that we do not remember ourselves.

CHAPTER 4

It is said in the Work that nothing happens to a person unless it is first in his atmosphere. It takes effort to learn to understand this idea well enough to accept it: to accept the fact that we alone are responsible for whatever happens to us, since everything takes place following definite patterns and attitudes prevailing in a person's being and it is necessary to observe oneself in life a great deal for the purpose of discovering these patterns.

When this subject comes up in a group for the first time, someone is always ready to ask, "What must I do to change undesirable patterns or the motifs that form these patterns?"

"First try to discover the pattern," is the usual answer. It couldn't very well be anything else.

From my personal experience, I know how extremely difficult it is to accept the thought that "man cannot do," actually to realize that there is nothing "to be done" about anything except try to understand it. It took me a very long period of long thinking and interested observation to understand, first of all, what may be a "repeat" or motif in the pattern of my life. To relate these, and to see them as a whole, impartially, already calls for some sort of change in one's way of thinking and reacting because these repeats cannot be found without touching the painful sore spots in one's personality. Worse still, this effort implies much intentional suffering if one will succeed in abstaining from reacting to the personal and general foibles, stupidity or cleverness in which life itself constantly involves us.

Moreover, when the eyes begin to open and speech is free from identification so that a spade can be openly called a spade without "emoting," there comes inner understanding of the statement that "everything happens because it was already there" in one's atmosphere, and with it, the realization that "nothing can be done about it except to accept, observe, and try to be impartial."

As time went on, and my efforts in this direction continued,

I eventually saw that impartial observation is really the first step that has to be taken to reach the steep ladder of innumerable efforts up which each of us must climb, step by step, before coming to the narrow ledge where work on oneself begins. The effort materializes as the first feeble thing that it is possible "to do": a doing that is selfward, in an inner direction, the only direction in which one may "try to do" by choosing to struggle against the overwhelming odds of life circumstances that keep us in a state of sleep.

Many times I have heard people ask, "But we can do many ordinary things, such as eating, dressing ourselves, all sorts of ordinary things. Also less ordinary things, such as planning and building, inventing new things, creating works of art, and so on. How can all this be done if man 'cannot do'?"

On one of these occasions I understood Mr. Ouspensky to answer, "Bring it up when we speak about the 6 triads."

Many among those who heard him lecture left the Work because of the simple statement that "man cannot do." Desultory remarks of all kinds arose from this source about the System and the "stupid" things that it teaches.

It surprised me at the time to see that the persons least prepared to struggle in an ordinary way were, most eloquent in their arguments against this statement in particular and took it at face value to justify their actions without giving it any thought. Apparently they did not weigh the statement before pronouncing judgment; it was twisted around, and taken on a pathetic level of understanding. None of these judges ever asked within my hearing, "What indeed does it mean that man cannot do?" They had their ready answer.

It became clear to me, through observation, that I cannot do in life because I cannot, in the first place, escape the laws under which man lives—particularly the law of accident. No matter what I plan to do, there is always this law to reckon with and, so far, I have found no way to escape it except by trying to understand it and to cooperate with it. It is evident, in my case, that I am not "doing" but merely adjusting myself to unavoidable conditions. I have no other choice except to go to pieces. As to the building of houses, boats, roads, it does not depend upon the will of a single man, it is a repeat pattern, each a motif in the general cloth of which life and living are made, in which man

feels the pull from all directions and must go along the lines already set and predetermined. Man eats to escape hunger, builds houses to have shelter, does what others do around him, is carried away by the current and fills his place in the overall design. All this doing is conditioned by life itself to meet some greatly felt need for what is to be created, or for the results that will come from it: funds, fame, shelter, means of communication—whatever may be desired. As deeply as one may wish to change this merry-go-round, one "cannot do" it.

Shortly after Mr. Ouspensky suggested that the question of man not being able "to do" be brought up when he spoke about the triads, one of the group members asked him, "Will you explain the triads to us?"

"That will be your work," he said. "Observe. Observe human activities, and you will understand without having to be told. Did you ever see a house build itself by itself? Isn't it built with a great deal of effort on someone's part? Every brick has to be brought to the spot, one by one. But it takes no trouble to destroy that house. Just strike a match, and it will go by itself. The house will go easily, too. Think it over."

"What is a triad, what forms it?" someone whispered, afraid that it might be the wrong question.

"Three forces," he replied. "We call them active, passive, and neutralizing. Or force 1, force 2, and force 3, which means that the forces enter in a certain order in each triad. There is a different triad for each human activity."

"But," he was asked, "how is it that there are only six triads when we have such a great variety of activities?"

"Nothing else is necessary," he said. "The six, and only six triads are sufficient for every kind of activity."

He wrote on the blackboard:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | - | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 2 | 1 | 3 | - | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | - | 3 | 2 | 1 |

"The forces enter into each triad in this manner to form six combinations. One of them is the triad which genius uses, even if at times unconsciously. This is the triad we use when studying our System. Another is the triad of invention, discovery, and is used for writing scientific books and for activities of that

nature. A third triad is used for ordinary purposes—university studies, professional activities, office work, et cetera. Then there is the triad employed in connection with physical work, such as carrying loads. Another triad is the triad responsible for destruction. And the last triad is the triad of crime."

"Can you tell us which is which?" eagerly asked one of the women present.

"I will have no formatory thinking," he snarled back.

"But Mr. Ouspensky," protested someone else, "on the one hand you tell us that man 'cannot do', and on the other you speak of the great effort needed to build a house. Isn't this a contradiction?"

"In our Work each concept is taken separately," answered Mr. Ouspensky. "You mix things that do not go together, that is one of the reasons why you cannot do. But once you are in the Work you are trying to learn 'to do.' Begin by thinking. Think seriously, because there are two triads which, when used, make everything better and better, and two of them that make things worse and worse."

"Could you give us a description of a triad at work?" he was asked.

The answer was in the negative.

"We avoid descriptions," he told us. But he added, "Read 'The Raven.' Poe gave a very good description of the first triad at work in his introduction."

When Mr. Ouspensky told us that ordinary man, like ourselves, lives under the Law of Accident but upon beginning to work on himself he can free himself in Magnetic Center from this law and live more under the Law of Fate until he has become a real man and lives under the Law of Cause and Effect, the question uppermost in the mind of some persons in my group was, "Will Work on myself help me to change my fate?"

Others stated: "My understanding of fate, from what Mr. Ouspensky said, is that it cannot be changed."

"Then isn't it useless to work on oneself if there is nothing that one can do to change one's fate, even a cruel and unwanted fate?" objected those who desired a reward for their efforts.

I understood Mr. Ouspensky's answers with reference to fate to mean that it cannot be changed for the simple reason that it is a fundamental, inalterable law; it does not concern what

will or will not happen to us, whether we will be happy or unhappy, rich or poor, married or single, ugly or beautiful. In our System, fate simply refers to this:

I am born male (or female), from a certain family, on a certain day, in a certain year, at a very definite place in the world, during a very definite period of the world's history, when the heavenly bodies are in a very definite position in the heavens. This is my fate. Evidently I cannot change it, for no one can change a man into a woman or vice versa, nor can he decide that he prefers to live in the Middle Ages, or in the year 3,000, nor that he wishes to have been born in Europe, Asia, America, or Africa, nor change the date of his birth or the family into which he was born. All this is given, and must be taken as it is. Nothing else can be done about it. This is what is meant in the Work by our "fate." Therefore, all men are subject to this law.

The matter of happiness or unhappiness is not the concern of our Work. Man makes his own happiness or unhappiness; it is a matter of attitude. If he wants changes to take place (since he cannot do he cannot change anything), he must begin by taking the only step that is possible to him, wherever he may stand at a given moment, and that is to work on himself. By working on himself, a change in his own attitude toward his circumstances will eventually come to him. This change in attitude will reflect itself in his surroundings. The greater the change in attitude, the more noticeable the change in life; each one can write his own ticket, so to speak.

This is really a deeply satisfactory concept of fate because, although it does exist and is limiting, insofar as one's sex, family background, place and time of birth, and so on, are concerned, work on oneself neutralizes these circumstances which become neither hindrance nor help but just plain circumstances that can be used in our Work in order to try to exert conscious efforts to awaken.

At times some people raised objections to this statement and asked how is it that man is said to be under planetary and other influences if they do not affect his fate and "what is written in the stars" for him.

My recollection is that Mr. Ouspensky told them that this was something else. I do not recall definite answers to these

questions, but it seems clear to me that man is subject to solar and planetary as well as lunar influences as a whole, in the sense that these heavenly bodies were in definite positions in the heavens at the time of his conception and birth and they created tensions on the earth in which he was born. These tensions affected his essence.

When bodies come close to one another, they exercise a certain pull on each other which is felt as tension. I need not stretch my imagination too far to understand, looking upon our Earth as a body—a celestial body, if you wish—that it, too, would be subject to tremendous pulls and tensions upon drawing close to other planets of the solar system. This tension might well make itself felt in special conditions on the Earth which would consequently affect those who are born at a given moment.

The same is true of the Sun. There conditions also change. There are periods of greater or lesser solar activity, whatever that may be; periods during which the Sun's change of position with relation to our Earth causes its light to shine on us differently, resulting in ice ages, or torrid climate, perhaps in changes of water currents in the earth, and so forth. These are very real changes, as the learned persons who have written books about them tell us. It is not a wild idea to assume that a man born at any given time is also affected by these upheavals, tensions, and vibrations, and that having to live under conditions thus created his outer and inner life will be affected by them.

Moreover, the Earth, too, has laws of its own which prevail during the entire period of man's transitory life on the planet. It is only natural that he should be affected by them: they manifest in horrible draughts, earthquakes, volcanic activity, ocean disturbances, inundations, pestilences, change of seasons, night and day, birth and death, to mention just a few. All these things affect man's life profoundly. He lives under all these laws. We were told repeatedly that counting these laws as they appear, from the level of the Sun Absolute to the Earth itself, we would find that the planet is governed by forty-eight orders of laws under which man must struggle for his existence and for his eventual liberation.

Adding to these laws the social, religious, military, business, political, and all sorts of other laws prevailing in our manmade world, it becomes evident that man has to contend with numerous

encumbrances, to say nothing of the wars he has to live through, his family background, his worldly means and social position, and many other influences that affect his life.

It was always useless to ask Mr. Ouspensky what these forty-eight laws were. He never volunteered any information on any subject until those who asked the questions showed they had done some thinking of their own, no matter how limited or poor, on the subject about which they spoke.

I personally had not yet given much time to the study of these laws. But he advised us all to make a list of every natural law about which we could think, trying to relate them to one another, to understand the nature of their relationship, how they proceeded one from the other, and why it could not be otherwise. I understood him to say that the laws in question are arrived at as follows:

In the Sun Absolute there is but 1 law,
which is the Will of the Absolute— 1

Out of Itself, the Sun Absolute, by its Will,
creates All Worlds, in a manner not understandable to us:
this is World 3 formed by all the Island Universes, and
3 laws operate in it— 3

From among All Worlds we single out the Milky
Way because it is our Galaxy; the Galaxies
create in turn from within themselves the
billions of suns that we call stars. In the
World of All Suns there are 6 laws: 3 from
All worlds plus 3 of its own— 6

From among all these Suns we single out our
own Sun because it concerns us directly; it
is subject to 12 laws: 3 from All Worlds, 6
from All Suns, plus 3 of its own 12

Our Sun has a family of planets, which, taken
altogether as a whole, form World 24
in which there are 24 laws in operation: 3
from All Worlds, 6 from All Suns, 12 from
our Sun, and 3 of its own— 24

And from among these planets we study the
Earth, since it is our home, the home of
Man. It is subject to 48 laws: 3 from All
Worlds, 6 from All Suns, 12 from Our Sun,
24 from All Planets, and 3 of its own 48

Beyond the Earth—our satellite, the Moon,
where there are 96 laws in operation: 3 from
All Worlds, 6 from All Suns, 12 from Our
Sun, 24 from All Planets, 48 from the Earth,
and 3 of its own— 96

It is at the end of the chain that represents
for us our

RAY OF CREATION

Beyond the Moon: Nothing—the Negative Absolute
For the Absolute is All and it is also Nothing.
It is Everything.

People asked frequently, "Do the same number of laws pre-
vail for satellites of other planets in the Solar System?"

"We study our own," Mr. Ouspensky would answer curtly.

His answers annoyed some persons. But I found them logical,
inasmuch as it makes no difference to us practically what may
or may not apply to other planets and satellites, stars, or island
universes. We live on Earth. First and foremost we must pay
attention to conditions that affect us here. By learning about
it, about its laws, about our situation we will be better prepared,
later on, to understand other similar formations making up the
entire Universe—past, present, or to come. I thought it was
rather simple. I saw it as a clear pattern, and accepted humbly.

But many of those who thought they were scientifically trained
struggled a great deal with this concept of the Ray of Creation.
For some, it became the insurmountable barrier even before
they had given it any thought; they absolutely refused to see
the validity of so simple a pattern of our World.

The Ray of Creation became, for me, foremost among the
diagrams of the Work that fostered long thinking which in turn
produced a chain reaction of moments of understanding that

made this simple pattern of the Universe unbelievably clear to me.

Mr. Ouspensky mentioned once more that in this great Cosmic Ray man as such does not really exist, although he has a very definite place in the lateral octave that begins in the Sun. There was a question: "Is that the reason why the Sun is called Deutercosmos?"

"I cannot guarantee," he replied.

This question referred to the names which Mr. Ouspensky had written for us alongside the various circles drawn on the blackboard to represent the Worlds in the Ray of Creation. He had called them Protocosmos, Iocosmos, Macrocosmos, Deutercosmos, Mesocosmos, Tritocosmos and Microcosmos.

Then he drew more circles beginning at the level of our Sun, and told us that this was the beginning of the lateral octave—the octave in which man could find his place in the Universe. I understood him to say that taking the Sun as the Absolute, it sounds the note "do"; All Planets follow as "si". At this point, in order to insure the passage of vibrations to further the growth of the Ray of Creation, a clever invention was made in what we know as Organic Life of which man forms a part; it is a thin film that covers the entire Earth and serves to pass on certain kinds of planetary, solar, and cosmic vibrations to the Moon for the purpose of feeding it. The notes "la, sol, fa" taken as a whole, are represented in this octave by dead organic life (forming lime deposits, oil deposits, coral reefs, and so on) by living organic life, which includes man, and by that to which this System refers as the "soul" of all living things which goes to feed the Moon at their death.

"Is there a special place for humanity, or is it included in All Organic Life?" he was asked.

"Both," he answered. "It is a matter of scale."

"Is Organic Life Tritocosmos, because it is in the Third Cosmos, the beginning of Humanity?" came another question.

"Keep on asking, and you will come to a question that I cannot refuse to answer," he replied.

Then he gave us as a task to make our own octaves along the lines which he had mentioned, for in this manner we would come to an understanding of the relationship that exists between different concepts.

I began at once to follow his advice, and, as was true of the others in our small group, made several octaves of all kinds for my own use. And what a thrill I had once I thought I understood! It is in the Lateral Octave, the Solar Octave, where man has any significance at all. What a rich mine this lateral octave has been for me! What long thoughts it has fostered, the sudden illuminations it has brought, the sheer joy that it has spread throughout many a day and night of constant devotion to it through thought!

"It is the only place where man has any significance," understood Mr. Ouspensky to say. And he added: "If we knew what 'sol/si' are, we would know everything that follows."

"What is 'sol/si'?" I frequently ask myself. "What is it that begins at Sun level and about which nobody knows anything?"

When I began to cope with the unending thoughts and arguments that arose within me through the introduction of all these diagrams into my experience everything changed, and the entire Universe became meaningful and very much alive for me. I had never given studious thoughts to these questions until Mr. Ouspensky waved the magic wand. But now my long thoughts were born, and with them came a series of inner changes and states about which I cannot speak because I am unable to explain them. It would be like explaining the taste of something.

Moreover, in a moment of inner hush I began to understand what it might mean to "create one's own moon." Mr. Ouspensky had frequently told us that Balanced Man is a man who is already in the process of creating a moon in himself. We had many interesting talks on this subject; and he insisted on our giving it as much thought as we could, suggesting that we gather all the data available to us about the Moon in order to come to an understanding of what it might mean to create a moon in oneself.

"First of all, think," I understood him to say, "what purpose serves the real moon around the Earth?"

And he went on to explain that, among other things, it served to protect the earth from falling meteors and other dangers that might come from outer space, and acted like a buffer, relative to the Earth.

I began to feel that when the Work has become the hub of one's activities it, too, can serve as a shock absorber in life and become like a moon to control our emotional tides and protect

us from whatever may strike from the direction of the outer world.

In any event, the impact of these ideas upon me was most constructive: my eyes opened, I began to look at everything with wonder; to learn ordinary things avidly; to relearn all the things that I had studied because I had to, and forgotten because I didn't care; to read attentively, and take hesitant steps in thinking; to integrate everything that I had ever noticed, wondered, and been thrilled about.

Mr. Ouspensky spoke repeatedly about the Ray of Creation. In those days we had no books of any kind regarding System ideas, and it was forbidden to take notes at the lectures. It is an essence tribute to Mr. Ouspensky's love for the Work, to his remarkable teaching ability, that unprepared persons like myself, to whom he taught all these things, became so absorbed in them as a result of his efforts that even if no book had ever been written the diagrams that he gave us, the ideas which he fostered in us with reference to them, the teaching of the System would have retained their integrity and remained intact. All could have been pieced together, even if the well-trained minds that later undertook this task had not been there at all and it had been necessary to draw from those like myself.

When Mr. Ouspensky taught, he made all three centers work: he never came down to anybody's level. Consequently, those who were eager to go on had to strain every faculty in themselves to climb up in a supereffort to reach him and receive his attention. That is how all of us who really worked with him gained in inner stature.

CHAPTER 5

Not long after the readings began for us in New York Mr. Ouspensky said that we had to bring other persons to hear them, for they could not be maintained for just a few people. Naturally we were to exercise discrimination in inviting others, particularly in envisaging the manner in which we would broach the subject. After having done this we had to write a brief outline on the person we proposed to invite, and then Mr. Ouspensky would read it and let us know whether the person could come to a lecture and when. At least this is what I and the people in my group had to do.

My enthusiasm about the System was so catching that I had no difficulty in infecting a large number of persons with the desire to hear Mr. Ouspensky. I suppose I was not very discriminating, because only a handful of my friends remained in the Work; the others came and went at regular intervals. Some stayed for a while before leaving; some left soon after hearing the first lectures. I presume this was helpful, since the Work is a body and all bodies must eliminate. I have always seen in these people who come and go something useful to us, for they represent to me the part that we have "eaten," in a sense, using their questions and their reactions to enlighten us before they eliminate themselves as waste material of their own accord. Perhaps this was why Mr. Ouspensky always had new groups in the process of formation. With the small four, or at most, five per cent remaining from each new group he finally formed the overall group with which he really worked while in America. This is as it appeared to me, of course.

I always found it surprising that most of my friends who came and left, also a few of the others who came and whom I had occasion to meet before they lost their interest in the readings had violent reactions against the concept of the Ray of Creation. I could hardly believe it, because I had found it most illuminating; it had made it possible for me to find my proper place in the scale of the living, so to speak.

When those of us who invited people to the lectures reported our conversations with them to Mr. Ouspensky, he would tell us that they belonged to definite types—antagonistic or admiring. They were just as welcome to come as anyone else; but the former would not return, and the latter would be around until their bubbling enthusiasm settled and things became stale—when they would drop out and become interested in something else.

He always seemed to know beforehand who would take either course of action. In any event, both these attitudes had a great deal to do with False Personality and wrong attitudes, I understood him to say. On one of these occasions he explained to us that only the householder can make progress in our Work because he has the right sense of values. He added that in some ancient systems men were divided into 4 categories, of which the other three were: the tramp, who has no sense of values at all; the lunatic, who has the wrong sense of values—particularly of his own importance; and still another, hasnamous, about which it was not important to speak at the moment because we had to learn many other things before he told us about hasnamous. Someday he would speak about it, he said. But so far as I was concerned, that day never came. I never heard him speak about this type except in a very general way, or to answer the questions that would turn up about it every now and then.

I remember particularly a friend of mine who was very belligerent about the Ray of Creation.

"Why complicate matters, speaking about rays and worlds and laws?" he protested.

"But why not?" I asked him.

"It is not scientifically correct," he answered, adding that it was a personal insult to his intelligence.

As for myself, I was very ignorant and had no scientific training; for me, nothing could be simpler than the exposition given via the Ray of Creation concerning world organization. And having given as much time as I possibly could to this particular matter, spending all the time I could spare at the Planetarium, asking questions from people supposedly well versed in astronomical learning, attending lectures given for the general public, reading books on the subject, and so on, I finally came to understand that there is really little in the Ray of Creation to contradict the accepted structure of the universe according to what I

had understood of the scientific theories about which I had been reading.

In any event, whether creation itself took place according to these theories or to System ideas did not matter to me. In either case, I, personally, had to accept what was mostly speculation on the part of others, and I had no way to confirm who was right and who was wrong, or whether all of them were wrong. And inasmuch as it was the System that had made the universe more understandable, closer, and certainly much more worth living for me, I settled for the System and let it rest at that.

Following a long series of lectures in which the Ray of Creation received every possible attention (I speak always of those who studied with me and were in my group, since it is evident that there are and were many who no doubt had attained much higher levels of being and understanding, with whom I had not come in contact at that time), someone remarked that the Ray of Creation was too awe-inspiring because, like a grain of sand in the ocean beds, man lost his identity in it.

Mr. Ouspensky was obviously pleased.

"This is what I had expected," he said. "It is the right kind of observation. Man has no significance in the Great Cosmic Octave."

"Is there any place where Man has some significance?" asked someone.

"In the Lateral Octave," he was told. And Mr. Ouspensky added, closing the subject, "We will return to that."

"You must admit that most of the persons who attended Mr. Ouspensky's lectures and then left him, were serious minded and intelligent. How do you account for this lack of interest if what he taught was so important?"

This question is frequently put to me by people who, with or without a smattering of what the Work is would be its willing critics. They imagine that this is a very sound point to make.

It is, of course, true that in New York, as must have been the case elsewhere, not all the persons who came to Mr. Ouspensky's lectures were equally interested in what they heard. Many left almost immediately after having heard two lectures; others stayed a while longer until they had heard the five lectures, and others still a bit longer. They were equally divided between very

brilliant individuals and just ordinary people like me.

So far as I was concerned, the fact that their interest waned did not affect me. It happens in every activity. Moreover, it always seemed to me that this involved the question of "Magnetic Center" about which Mr. Ouspensky had explained, that it is not equally developed in everyone; some persons have no magnetic center, others have more than one magnetic center, and so on.

"Magnetic Center," I understood Mr. Ouspensky to say, forms in a man as a result of the accumulation of "B" influences. When enough of these influences have created this center in him, the man has a possibility of recognizing and benefiting from influence "C" should it ever come his way. Otherwise the possibility will not materialize for him.

"B" influences, as I understand, are influences which, contrary to "A" influences that come from life itself, are conscious at their origin, and come from schools. They are influences deriving from religion, from art, literature. As these influences enter the vortex of ordinary life they become "B" influences, and if a man is attracted by them and receives enough of them there forms in him through this accumulation a point at which he eventually becomes free from the law of accident. This point becomes a magnetic center that eventually brings him into contact with "C" influences, usually coming from a man who is either directly himself or through another man, connected with this higher influence.

As to influences "A," I understand that they are ordinary life interests: sports, politics, fashions, games, business, et al. There is nothing to be said against these centers of attraction except that if a person's interest is solely centered in them there is no opportunity for Magnetic Center to grow, and influences "B" will not touch the man. In that case, he will never recognize influence "C" no matter how close he comes to it. But when sufficient "B" influences are received by a person to form a Magnetic Center, this center serves its purpose once it has brought the person into contact with a school. This is all it is supposed to do.

The man who has too many centers of attraction, or even one such center created by "A" influences, and conflicting with the one that influences "B" have created will be unable to keep

to one track and to devote enough time to work such as, for instance, our Work. He will zigzag constantly or will be pulled away by one of his other interests, or by his other big interest, particularly when it cannot blend with the Work itself. And, in the total absence of influences "B," a man, no matter how cultured, educated, and intellectual simply will not feel the attraction of ideas that come from a circle of humanity that is entirely apart from the circle of confusion in which ordinary life proceeds.

In relation to "B" influences, there were many questions as to whether certain things were desirable or undesirable. The answer was, as usual, that in this Work of ours, that is only desirable which furthers the purpose of awakening; and that is undesirable which hinders this purpose. This is why, since it is not possible to do evil consciously or in an awakened condition, evil is mechanical and undesirable. When challenged as to how he knew that evil could not be done consciously, Mr. Ouspensky would invariably answer, "Try to do consciously something that you feel is wrong."

As a result of these words many unfriendly listeners, interpreting them in their own way and listening to their own thoughts, would claim that Mr. Ouspensky taught people to do evil consciously. I heard both statements repeatedly. For me, this serves as added evidence of the fact that ordinary man number 1, 2, and 3, such as we are; gives to everything the color of his own thoughts.

"What does it mean that Magnetic Center has served its purpose when it has brought a person into contact with influence 'C' and is no longer needed?" many persons asked Mr. Ouspensky.

"It is replaced by Work," he answered.

"Is it the beginning of the Path?" someone questioned.

"The Path is far removed from ordinary life. It is outside of it. So long as we are what we are, man number 1, number 2, number 3, even man number 4, there can be no Path for us."

"What is the Path?" asked one of the men, hoping to catch him unawares.

"It would be better to ask what steps lead to The Path" he answered.

This is what I understood him to say. Then he spoke to us

about the ladder that must be climbed step by step before the Path can be reached. The first step is the beginning of the Work, and no one can take it for another; nor is it possible for anyone to go up a step without leaving someone in his place. It will take a very long time, and a great many efforts. But once the last rung of the ladder has been gained a man may stand on his own feet, although he still can lose everything that he has gained. Only man number 7 is free from this danger of loss.

Some members of our group found it very difficult to interest others in the ideas of the System, and often wondered whether the ability to bring new people who might free one to move on was a matter of type. Everybody asked questions about types; we all wanted to know what our type was. But this is something about which I heard very little, and I have worked still less with the idea. Once we were told that the best way to study types is to observe oneself, since the more one knows oneself the better one will know other people; and the better one knows other people, the closer one is to understanding differences in type. Therefore, in the Work, we are always brought back to the importance of exerting efforts to work on ourselves if we wish to progress further and aim some day to reach the last rung of the ladder that leads to the Path.

The concern with the ladder, and the need to leave someone in our place in order to step up was very prevalent in our group. It is said in the Work that we stand on the shoulders of those whom we bring into it. I think, in retrospect, that this may be one of the reasons why so many persons from among those we brought to the lectures left almost as soon as they came to hear them—in our eagerness to step up the ladder we sacrificed discrimination! It is not easy to find persons to whom to pass on what one receives; we do not see this until much later, when we understand better what it means “to pay in kind” and that those who receive from us must be ready to make use of what we give them or else we ourselves risk losing everything. We cannot refuse to give; it is only in giving that we empty ourselves to make room to receive more, and prepare to move forward when the moment comes. But the giving must be only to those who are asking: it must not be wanton giving. I feel that this applies to us all, on every rung of the ladder. It is indeed

a significant thought that can yield a great deal when one works with it and gives it some long thinking.

My distance from that last rung of the ladder of our early dreams is far away from me, yet knowing that it is there, way ahead in the remote distance, is like a flickering light shining intermittently, to point out the way, and keeps my heart warm through the intensity of its heat.

When the Step Diagram was introduced to us, all of us thought that it had to do with this first step which Magnetic Center prompts us to take, and to the subsequent steps up the Ladder that leads to the Path.

“Formatory thinking,” said Mr. Ouspensky, in answer to our various questions.

However, he said that although all diagrams are necessarily related to one another, each must be studied separately. Regarding the Step Diagram, also called the Diagram of All Living, I understood him to say that it has nothing to do with what we were thinking as it only shows who eats what, and by what it is eaten, and that everything in the universe is interrelated and dependent upon everything else and must eat and be eaten in turn.

I understood him to say that this Diagram of All Living includes everything that is known to man. It shows the Absolute engulfing all, Archangels eating Angels, Angels feeding on man, man on animals and plants, plants on minerals, minerals on metals, and so on.

In System vocabulary, “Angels” are the planets and “Archangels” are the suns.

Although my understanding of angels and archangels is entirely different from this concept, and the words were sacred to me as a result of training and background, I have never shied away from accepting the new meaning of the words themselves in the Work because I learned, long before they came into use, to accept the System vocabulary on a basis apart from ordinary language, and I find no conflict in simultaneously using similar words with different meanings according to whether I speak of and refer to the Work or to my everyday ordinary world.

From the very beginning I had the feeling that any degree of relative understanding of this Work sprang from one's ability

to divorce oneself from any association of words and their meaning, as one uses them in everyday language. I was willing from the start to learn whatever was offered on the terms of the Work. It had been said that any other attitude would lead to failure to understand the Work instinctively and to benefit by its impact. And so it seemed sensible to me to trust Mr. Ouspensky at least that far, and to be sufficiently sincere in my desire for objectivity to accept words as offered for System purposes without cancelling their meaning for other purposes so far as I was personally concerned.

To make myself clear, I mean by this, that I was willing to accept the concepts of the Work clothed in whatever terms might be given, whether or not these terms had other meanings for me. I set aside my own understanding of words when I dealt with Work ideas, and did not allow my love, hatred, or indifference toward specific words through association with the ideas that they conveyed to me to influence or to color my understanding of that which, in this particular System, they were meant to convey.

When I was told that, "In this System oxygen means passive force," I understood that from then on, when speaking of System ideas or in any way thinking of them or using them in my conversation, the word oxygen, for me, would stand for passive force—however little or much I might know about passive force. The same held true for "angels" and "archangels" despite the deep meaning that these words have in my ordinary life and in my ordinary language and thoughts. I never saw any valid reason to refuse this simple acceptance or to let my own dictionary provide a barrier against my understanding of the Work on its terms.

In fact, these discrepancies in meanings served for me in those days as a most desirable agent to promote what in much later days I came to know as "the friction between yes and no" in myself. They forced my hand and made me come to terms with myself, to give thought to my own understanding of concepts in the System and in my experience. One long thought would bring another, then another. I learned to use my mind in a different manner, and there formed within me slowly the kaleidoscopic patterns that have embellished my search and urged me to go on with the struggle with the machine that is

I, in an effort to avoid dangers and pitfalls as I endeavor to take a step up in the ladder.

The question of influences, both the general and the specific influences to which man is subject, and the statement that "man cannot escape living under various influences, but he can choose from among them, those under which he prefers to live," also seems unfavorably to affect many would-be critics of the ideas of the system.

The fact that among these influences are included "Planetary influences," "the influence of the Moon," "the influence of the Sun," does not help us with our critics. And yet, how simple it all is—as it seems to me. I have given much thought to the subject because somehow, from the very beginning, possibly because such is my type, whenever anyone has unjustly attacked the Work or the persons who taught it to us I have felt the more prompted to give thought and attention to the points that were questioned.

I knew from my personal experience that Madam and Mr. Ouspensky, (to say nothing of the one and only Mr. Gurdjieff whom I did not meet until later), were so different from anyone else I had ever met, so far above and beyond the average person that they must have sound reasons—not clear to me and others like myself—for everything they said or did in connection with our Work. It was evident to me that they were far more conscious than I was. Therefore condemnations prodded me into seeking to learn more about them and about the meaning of their words.

I thank my stars that it was so! Perhaps, in a sense, it is a way of discovering what it may mean to "choose the influence under which one prefers to live." Certainly I had the choice between joining the deriders and faultfinders or of keeping my own counsel, believing in the sincerity of our teachers and trying to find out for myself what they were talking about before passing judgment.

Now, then, speaking about influences, I recall that Mr. Ouspensky told us that before accepting or rejecting anything at all it is to our advantage to try to reason about it a great deal, asking ourselves sincerely, "What do I understand by this?"

When he said this he was talking about the Moon, explaining the method we might follow to think about the statement that "in the Work it is said that the 'soul' goes to feed the Moon

when we die." I shall try to use this method in reasoning about influences:

- What do I know about this word, and what is my ordinary understanding of it?
 - In what connection have I heard it used before?
 - How can something or someone exert influence upon me?
 - What would I consider a desirable or an undesirable influence upon me?
- And so on.

In a case like this, it is understood that I may not use reference books. My recollection is that Mr. Ouspensky wished all of us to speak in our own terms about that which was ours, in the sense that it was clear to us. I might be alone on a deserted island, yet at any time I might speak in this way to myself, if it were necessary, as I am now trying to do.

So I would say that, for me, an influence is that which moves me to do or to say a certain thing, to feel in a given way, to act in a given direction, or something which will exert some sort of force on me which will modify my actions. I repeat that this is what it means to me. My interpretation may be faulty, but the Work must not be blamed for that. I write about myself; this is how I interpret it.

Now, what do I understand by the influences of which I am speaking? I am not concerned, at the moment, with influences A and B under which man lives and which may or may not create in him a Magnetic Center that may eventually bring him into contact with influence C and a school of an esoteric or rather "psychological" nature. I speak of the influences coming to us from outer space, particularly in connection with the Ray of Creation to which those who object to the System point to say that it teaches superstitions and engages in astrological divinations.

These influences, then, come to us from the Sun Absolute, the Island Universes, our Milky Way, our Sun, the Planets, our Earth itself, the Moon. Since I know that the Lateral Octave, which is the octave in which Man has a place, starts in the Sun, that it is the Octave in which Organic Life, of which I am a part, sounds the La/Sol/Fa, I will try first to examine the meaning for me, of the words that man can serve the interests of the Sun by coming

under its influence, or else the interests of the Moon by remaining under her influence. We have to choose. There is no standing still: we must either strive to reach higher levels of consciousness or go in the contrary direction, for everything in the universe inevitably goes up or comes down.

I chose the Sun. I wish to be under its influence. Let me see now how I think I understand this:

First of all, what do I really know about the Sun, all by myself; what can I really understand about it because it is mine, not because I can read what learned men have found out about it through efforts of their own?

Well, I know from observing it that the Sun gives light to us on the Earth and it dispels darkness. I know that the Sun gives warmth; I know it from my personal experience. I know that warmth is necessary to me not only because I am uncomfortable when temperature drops, but because I know that dead things are cold. I have touched them. Life needs warmth. The Sun gives warmth, therefore it is beneficial to life. That is, the Sun makes it possible for us to live, it is an instrument whereby the gift of life comes to us from God Who is its source.

I know, too, that it is possible to make the fire that is so important to man's existence with the help of sunrays. This is all that I actually know from my own personal observations. Everything else that I have learned or read on this subject is not really mine. I have not discovered it. I have no proofs of it. It supports my experience, it enriches me, it widens my horizons—but it is not mine. By myself I would not have found it out. So since my own knowledge is so limited I shall stop here and ask myself the question: "What do I understand by coming into the influence of the Sun, so far as my personal life is concerned?"

My understanding is that the activities, the thoughts, the world influences that are helpful to make my ordinary life possible, as well as the lives of ordinary beings like myself; must be attuned to Sun influences and whatever destroys life, checks its development, is an influence contrary to Sun action. The Sun is the source of light; therefore whatever dispels darkness and promotes life at the same time is a desirable activity. The Sun gives warmth; therefore whatever fosters hope in my heart and in the hearts of others like myself is a good activity. The Sun makes it possible to have fire, the fire that will remind us of its

light in the darkness, that will give us some warmth in its absence, that cooks our food to help us live. So whatever fire I can kindle in my heart, and in the heart of others through the wish to be and to help them to be, through the wish to ascend in the ladder of being unto higher levels of consciousness, and through all actions concomitant with this activity, all represent Solar influences and, in accepting them, I place myself under the Sun's influence of my own volition.

Of course so far as my experience goes, the arguments have never been about the Sun and the influence that it may exert. They have been against the "planetary" influences of which Mr. Gurdjieff spoke to Mr. Ouspensky, and he to us, which they said could be used for "self-remembering" and for "awakening" but which instead cause great havoc among men and are even responsible for wars.

Now, then, what is my understanding of planets? What do I really know about them?

I know, in the first place, that our Earth is one of these planets. Secondly, there are several planets. Taken altogether with their respective satellites, comet visitors, and the moving meteors that have their orbit between Mars and the Earth they make what is known to us as the Sun's Family. Therefore the Sun with all these bodies represent one unit as a celestial family into which I have been born, since I am part of Organic Life on its child, the Earth.

Of course my knowledge of these facts is not direct knowledge, as is the case of the very little I know about the Sun. But it is knowledge in existence almost since man began to think—with little variations here and there. Particularly it is knowledge which, for some unknown reason, possibly because I was a fervent star watcher as a child, became emotionally mine at a very early age when my English tutor, Mr. Luna, apportioned to me part of the Milky Way when we made excursions together into our "Skylands."

About conditions on these planets I can say nothing for the simple reason that I would have to refer to the books I have read in order to have correct facts, and to confirm whatever I may remember having read. This I cannot do. It would not be mine at all, in the sense of my clear recollection as what I have just

said about the planets is mine because it came intelligibly into my experience before I was six years old.

During my childhood I learned already from Mr. Luna the reason why some stars change as they seem to change in what we called our Skylands. I knew what he explained to me about the planets; how they differed from other celestial bodies, what a satellite was, and how the planets, the "stars" that baffled me, moved around as I saw them move because they followed their preordained path in the heavens, moving around the Sun, at times coming closer to it, at times moving farther away. In like manner they came at times nearer, at times farther from one another, according to their respective travels along their own paths in the Sun's orbit.

Even then, at that early age, I thrilled at the thought of the Sun incased in threads of light reeled off the spools of its planets as they went on their path. And I would lie there by Mr. Luna for long hours at a time on the inside patio of my house, looking up, always looking up in the hope that some day I might see some of those trails of light.

Mr. Luna was not a good artist. The most he could do was draw a very crude sketch to give me an idea of the movements of the Sun and its planets. But it was all very real so far as I was concerned. Their luminous paths were quite visible to my mind. And so I wondered and worried, after he had shown me what it was like, thinking that the planets might at some time run into one another in their wanderings. But he explained to me what he knew, and what might be clear to a young child about why this event I feared was not likely to occur within many million years. He showed me that they were never on the same spot at the same time—which would be catastrophic—for they were at unbelievable distances from one another even when their roving brought them close to each other and to the source of their life, their Father the Sun.

I knew of the aphelion long before I learned the word for it, since I knew very well when my planets were farthest from the Sun. And I knew about the perihelion in like manner, so that in a sense, I feel that this little I imagine I know about the planets and their wanderings is really something that belongs very much to me.

And then one day, many years later, when I was attending one of Mr. Ouspensky's first lectures in New York, he spoke of the Sun and showed us the path that it traveled. As he began to speak, I came to life at the Studio and in my house in Valencia at the same time. He was telling us that the Sun traveled in great splendor, surrounded and protected—this is what I understood him to say—by its planets which were in turn surrounded and protected by their moons, the whole cortege leaving a trail of light in their wake!

Just a few moments earlier that same evening I heard him utter for the first time within my hearing the name given in the System to planets and to the suns, namely, Angels and Archangels. Before the shock of this new concept had time to evoke distaste and protest in me, he went on to give us this diagram of the Sun's path; and my mind, unable to receive impressions without associations, quickly leapt back through the years to the inside patio of my house in Valencia, to Mr. Luna and our sky excursions. Curiously enough my recollection evoked a thought of my childish mind, long since forgotten over the years, that my tutor represented in our household the Archangel Raphael whose picture hung over my Nana's bed, and that he was my satellite because he was always with me to teach and protect me; and wasn't his name Luna too? Why I saw the Archangel Raphael and the Moon in Mr. Luna at one and the same time is more than I can say. I guess I was a rather stupid child. But this memory came back to me together with Mr. Luna's words when Mr. Ouspensky drew his diagram. I had a feeling of warmth that baffles description, a feeling of closeness I had never felt before for Mr. Ouspensky. I understood at once what he was saying, and accepted his reference to angels and archangels with gratitude and joy as I gained understanding of something that expanded within me, although to this day I cannot explain what it is that I then understood.

On the occasion of which I speak I was sitting in the first row. A few tears came down my cheeks: I can still sense them. Mr. Ouspensky caught sight of them, somehow, and he nodded a few times while he looked at me through his thick glasses before going back to his chair to bring the lecture to an end.

I left the Studio at 79th Street, present to myself as I have never been since. I could almost feel my own footsteps within

my heart, as though I were stepping lightly within me.

It is, therefore, on the basis of this authority that I will proceed with my inquiry into my limited understanding of planetary influences, and I will say that it is very clear to me when Mr. Gurdjieff tells us there are times when the planets come too close to one another in their wanderings that great tensions are created faraway in outer space which affect us down here on Earth. These tensions manifest in us in the form of nerves, hysteria, hatred, irritability, in fighting or in war—that is, activities detrimental both to our lives and to the lives of others, people of all races, colors and creeds, human beings like ourselves.

"Ridiculous!" scream our critics. "What can planets way up in the heavens have to do with men? Superstitions from the Middle-ages. Rubbish."

But to me it isn't, because I see from my own experience that when I come too close to people in public places, in crowds, I don't feel at ease. The closer they come to me the more inclined I am to push them, to shove them aside. I can see that they feel likewise. The same must be true when the planets conjoin in the heavens with the Earth, particularly when a few of them chance to be in too close conjunction at the same time. This is very evident to me.

This tension of which Mr. Gurdjieff speaks, may actually create special waves of vibratory disturbances on Earth which I, its child, sense and feel. I react to them by becoming tense in turn. As a result, I am more ready to fight, to destroy, to hate, to kill, to fall within the influence of the emotional disturbances caused by planetary wanderings in the heavens. If, instead of falling prey to them, I recognize their presence and try to remember myself when I feel annoyed and irritable, if I try to remember that it is possible for me to try to avoid the expression of negative emotions then I am placing myself directly under the influence of the Sun; I will not only eventually succeed in overcoming irritability and frustration, hatred and destruction, but I will begin to fall within the Sun's influence more and more until finally, upon the Seed that lies deep within my heart, in which Essence throbs, the Good Lord will shower His blessings of Grace which will come through Sun rays, to give birth to the spirit that slumbers and must be awakened within me!

All my struggles to free myself from negative emotions, therefore, are struggles to wrench free from planetary influences because I have chosen or wish to choose to come under the influence of the Sun, as I understand it. In so doing I determine the direction in which I wish to travel, and thereby simultaneously struggle to free myself from heavier Earth influences binding me to the organic-animal kingdom in which I was born, and from the influence of the sleep-inducing even if beautiful Moon.

* * *

In those early days, when there were no books or pictures available to us, Mr. Ouspensky gave us diagrams by drawing them on the blackboard. He drew them himself, although occasionally he would call on one or another of his pupils from the London group to assist him. He gave us, as he drew, the general outline of the diagram's meaning. When he had finished he would sit close-mouthed, to wait for our questions in order to help us to enlarge through his answers, our scant understanding of the puzzle before our eyes. At no time did he offer any explanation that was not justified by the questions posed by us.

I remember the first time our group saw the diagram representing the Chemical Factory, and we all drew a blank. I had the dismal feeling that this would be the death warrant of my efforts to understand System ideas. I was completely at a loss, with no idea of what it was all about.

Mr. Ouspensky was addressing a combined group that evening. It happened after those in my group had heard for the fourth time the lectures that have now been published under the title of *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*. We had been working with him as a side group for about two months.

We had entered a meeting of an older group formed mostly by people who had come with him from London. All the questions came from these people, and, as I say, I understood nothing of what they were speaking about. Fortunately for me practically everyone in my group shared my predicament, irrespective of his scholastic achievements.

Mr. Ouspensky drew the diagram on the board, saying this represented a man in profile, facing left. The three divisions stood for the head, the chest, the stomach and lower parts, respectively. He did not volunteer any further explanation for our

benefit, but drew a small circle to the left of the upper part of the diagram, marked it DO:768 and brought a line down from it to the lower division of the diagram stating that this was the beginning of the food octave, and that the ordinary food, of whatever kind that man eats for his sustenance, comes under the category of DO:768.

Nature, he told us, provides man with certain substances produced by his own body to help in the transformation of this food. From now on, he said, he would refer to these substances as "CARBONS" to show that they were produced by the organism itself.

Then he threw those of us in my group into confusion by drawing circle after circle within the diagram itself.

"Food meets 'CARBON' 192 and becomes RE:384, which in turn meets 'CARBON' 96 to become MI:192, and nothing else would be possible for man at this juncture if Nature had not provided here a shock in the form of the second being-food which enters the organism as the ordinary air we breathe."

As he spoke these words Mr. Ouspensky drew another small circle, telling us it represented air which entered the human body as DO:192 to give a shock to the food octave, and gave it energy to proceed further as it met other carbons present in the body: 48, 24, 12 (in very small amounts) and 6, to come into completion at SI:12 the finest energy which man's factory is able to produce by itself.

Regarding the air octave, that of man's second being-food, which entered the human body as DO:192, we were told that, having given the needed shock to MI:192, it was itself acted upon by "CARBON" 96 and went as far as MI:48 where it stopped due to lack of sufficient energy to go further.

"The third being food—impressions, all kinds of impressions—enter man's body as DO:48." Mr. Ouspensky drew still more circles as he went on speaking. It was explained that this octave of impressions did not go further because in man there is not enough of the energy in "CARBON" 12 to ensure the progress of these air and impression octaves. Nature has made no such provisions. However, "man himself may exert efforts to bring 'CARBON' 12 to the point of entering impressions," said Mr. Ouspensky as he went on drawing circles and figures, explaining that having met "CARBON" 12, incoming impressions, as DO:48,

acquired sufficient energy to give a shock to MI-48 and help the air octave to proceed to SOL-12 after meeting other carbons in the body. This octave may even go as high as LA-6. Moreover, DO-48, with the help of "CARBON" 12 becomes RE-24, and on meeting "CARBON" 6, could go up to MI-12. This is as far as he went on that memorable night.

People in my group, generally articulate, were silent. Finally I said, "I understand absolutely nothing."

"You will," he nodded. "Think, think."

A few questions came; he answered them.

"Is there a reason why Nature did not make provisions for the development of the third octave?"

"Its development is not necessary for the ordinary purposes of living. It can be developed only by personal effort."

"Is that what we try to do here?"

"If you wish."

"Since 'CARBON' 12 is already present in man, how is it that DO-48 cannot meet it on entering?"

"'CARBON' 12 is present in man in very small quantity. It is not available at the place where impressions enter. The octave cannot proceed without efforts on the part of man."

"Is there any reason for using musical terms in this diagram?"

Mr. Ouspensky glanced at the blackboard before answering this question. One of his assistant-pupils had been busy during this time, placing the letters C O N in varying order alongside each figure. Then he said, "Yes. This shows how the Law of 3 and the Law of 7 work in man's body."

"What is the meaning of those letters—C O N?" someone asked timidly.

"Carbon, oxygen, nitrogen. We will come to that."

"And where do the figures come from?" asked someone else.

"From the Table of Densities," he answered. "All matter is represented in this table, as has already been shown. Everything is matter—matter of a different density. In our vocabulary we refer to matters as hydrogens. It has all been explained before."

But we, in my group, had never seen the Table of Densities of which he spoke; nor had anything of this kind been explained to us. We didn't study the Table of Densities until years later.

Strangely enough, none of the persons with whom I worked, nor other persons with whom we were acquainted in the Work had any idea of what the carbons, nitrogens, hydrogens, oxygens, and musical notes and figures might signify. We stood aghast at this bizarre diagram, despite the fact that Mr. Ouspensky stated very definitely that it was something very ordinary and had nothing at all to do with ordinary chemical elements in the usual sense or with the musical octave as such. We had to interpret the words we had heard in System vocabulary terms only.

Everyone in my group drew a blank with this diagram. All of us began to work, trying to unravel what seemed to be a riddle exactly because we paid no heed to Mr. Ouspensky, and were still pondering in terms of the fantastic and yogic marvelous. Of course we had a marvel before us. But it was a marvel so commonplace, in a sense, that it never occurred to anyone of us, not even to the two doctors in our group to imagine that Mr. Ouspensky was directing our attention to it in such mysterious words.

Summer recess came for us in New York that year, just about the time we were given the famous diagram. Each one of us in my group worked to the point of exhaustion to decipher this simple enigma. To no avail.

We disbanded for the summer. Over a period of three months I spent practically all of my free time in figuring out what this all meant. I entertained no other thought, night or day. The diagram even came to me in my dreams.

When we began to work with Mr. Ouspensky he had made it very clear to us that "in our Work we begin where we were. We begin with what we have."

Now this thought came to my rescue. I asked myself, "Have I anything with which to begin to understand this diagram? If so, what is it that I can really say that I have?"

I reasoned that all I knew was that we were dealing with food; the three kinds of food on which man thrives, according to our Work: ordinary food, air, impressions.

"So, what happens when I eat?" I asked myself.

And I began thinking about the ingestion of food, how it was subject to the action of the salivary glands and other stomach juices that attacked it after I had swallowed it, about the manner in which food is distributed in the organism, and so on.

"What happens after that?" I would ask myself, trying to break down the digestive process and to match it with the figures in the diagram so far as my little knowledge of physiology made it possible.

"Could saliva be said to be carbon 192, which breaks down starches and helps turn the food into chyme. . . would this be 384? Or chyle perhaps? Would 384 be the water hydrogen in the Table of Densities of which he spoke? If I assumed that it was, then what? Air comes in, there is an exchange of gases. Is 96 venous blood? Could 48 be arterial blood? What are the other carbons, glandular secretions, perhaps? Is SI-12 sex energy? Didn't he say that SI-12 is the highest energy the human body can produce by itself? That would complete the food octave. Sex energy is creative because it can create new worlds, other beings like ourselves, the children to whom we give birth. The answer must lie in this direction!"

I went on assiduously working on this diagram, reading, studying all the books on physiology that I could find. My thoughts never stopped.

"What is SOL 48? It is in the upper part of the diagram, in the head. Mental energy, perhaps? Thought? He said that all was material, but of different density. Is that it? What can 'CARBON' 12 be, to help us assimilate impressions? Attention? Memory? What did he say about impressions? That they include everything we hear, see, touch, feel, taste."

I worked over drawing after drawing of this diagram. I was elated beyond words. And this tremendously long thought, which gestated for three months in my mind, finally gave fruition. I could hardly wait until the lectures reopened. In the meantime I wrote to Mr. Ouspensky telling him of my work and my conclusions. One or two other persons in my group, each working completely independently, had done likewise.

When the lectures began again, Mr. Ouspensky started where he had stopped, that is, with the Chemical Factory.

"We have here the picture of a man facing sideways, toward the left," he repeated. "Think of it from a purely physiological viewpoint. There is no mystery about it. Your food comes in here. . . et cetera!"

What a slight addition this was! And how fortunate indeed that he had waited until now to make it. With a feeling of warmth

which I cannot describe, I understood his reason for never giving us more than we asked for. At first I did not understand. But now I realized the great value of his method, now, this very moment, when he had added those few words that I had to eke out of countless sleepless nights, as had many others to be sure, when he had gone as far as he had and would go no further.

Again I experienced that feeling of expanding gratitude and deep joy that always brings with it understanding and sweeps me with emotion. I understood many things, enough of them to spare for the digestion and assimilation of things that were still to take place in the distant future, and from which I would gain strength, just because of the "form and sequence" in which Mr. Ouspensky introduced the System ideas to us at this time, in my particular group, which is the only group about which I can speak.

Whenever I have occasion to talk about the Chemical Factory with others who have come after us, in my experience, they have never failed to ask, "What is 'Carbon' 12? Did Mr. Ouspensky ever say?"

What indeed is "Carbon" 12!

And how little we understand the Work, how little we know about Mr. Ouspensky and the manner in which he worked. He was not a person who would explain anything to us unless we told him in advance what we thought we ourselves understood or did not understand regarding any material he had given us.

And this is where his strength lay: we all had to exert titanic efforts to come a little closer, no matter how slightly, to the heights on which he stood.

Thus he fostered our desire to grow.

* * *

During one of our meetings someone in our small group said to Mr. Ouspensky, "Your statement at the last general meeting that 30,000 is a figure of 'cosmic significance' was not clear to me."

"What is your question?" asked Mr. Ouspensky.

"Does this figure refer in any way to time?"

"Yes," he answered. "Man has four measurements for time—the quickest eye impression, breath, night-and-day, average life."

And then, as he drew the diagram of the Table of Cosmoses

for us, he continued, "For instance, Tritocosmos—Organic Life—takes a breath in 24 hours, and 24 hours represents man's day. You live an average of 30,000 days, or 80 years. This is only one day for Organic Life. It is but a quick eye impression for the Sun. Do you see the relation? Study it in this way, and you will understand the difference in scale."

"Then the importance of the figure 30,000 is that it represents the different time in the various worlds?" insisted the same person.

"Multiply 30,000 by 80, which represents the average years of man's life, by the 24 hours that form his day, by the 3 seconds that represent his breath, by the 1/10,000 of a second representing his quickest eye impression, and it becomes possible to establish the relation existing between man and the higher worlds. Divide 30,000 in the same way, and you will find the relationship that exists between man and the worlds below his own." And then, "That will be all for now," said Mr. Ouspensky.

It would be inadequate for me to elaborate on this. If I have mentioned it in passing it is because the words he spoke on this particular occasion became important to me as they cleared up certain aspects of the problem that I faced in my endeavor to understand the concept of recurrence. They helped me to see that it is possible for many lives to proceed simultaneously on different levels, and at different rates of speed entailing the materialization of different possibilities. And this meant a great deal to me.

We studied many diagrams with Mr. Ouspensky, and whole books might well be written about each one of them. But I am only speaking of the things that I heard and made mine by long thinking, nurtured with love and interest; of the things about which I can ponder to the end of my days without ever again having to read about them; things which no one can take away from me because they are mine, after my own fashion as herein given; to the extent that I paid for them in thought and interest until they burst within me in shining light to last until my time stops.

It is this astounding property of the Work to expand within me that has held me in its sway from the very beginning.

Properly speaking, I was not prepared to understand these ideas; but as soon as I heard them my eyes were opened, my mind became free from bondage, and the inner springs of my

heart burst wide open gushing forth in a torrent of rich emotions. I have ever since based my work on myself on the effort to keep this emotional oil flowing by devoting hours of "long thinking" to our Work concepts.

Through this attitude help came to support me during the long night of dearth of thought that followed Mr. Ouspensky's departure from America, and subsequently from this world. Then it became necessary for me to apply Work principles to myself; it was necessary to work steadily on myself without faltering. For what would be the good of these ideas if they failed to accomplish the very thing that I felt they had taught me?

During this hard arid period of our work the few members of our group who fell by the wayside were those who had not learned to feed themselves, and had argued with Mr. Ouspensky because he refused to feed and to cater to them.

One, more courageous than the rest, once asked him, "How is it that you tell us categorically this is so, and that is not so, but then refuse to explain your statements to us?"

"I don't know," he had answered. "You find out. Maybe then we can talk."

His "I don't know's" had always infuriated these particular group members. Others among us found his refusal to give explanations and definitions, his reluctance to cripple our minds with fatuous terminology, to be very advantageous and laudable indeed.

"People," Mr. Ouspensky would say once in a while, "want everybody to help them become different beings. They do not even ask themselves what it means to become a 'different being.' And you, yourselves, are like them. You cannot become different beings because everything has a price, and you do not want to pay this price. You want to be told. You do not listen. You want something different, but want everything to be the same—the way you know it, the way you want it. This kind of work is not useful to us."

CHAPTER 6

One fateful evening, when he was lecturing in the Grand Ballroom at Steinway Hall, Mr. Ouspensky dropped a bombshell by announcing to us his decision to discontinue his lectures in New York and to return to London in the very near future.

"Those of you who go to Mendham," he said, "will have Madam Ouspensky to direct you. Those of you who do not, must find your own bearings."

That was all. As simple and as final as that!

Grief, astonishment, disbelief, desperation—all this was reflected on the faces of the persons in the Hall who felt the value of the Work that Mr. Ouspensky had been conducting here in New York. As for those of us who were not going to Mendham at that particular time—we wriggled, panted, and gasped for air in a frantic effort to save ourselves from despair. There was among us a handful who had been working closely with Mr. Ouspensky in New York whom he referred to as "his people," mentioning that those who went to Mendham were "Madam's people."

Now, these few people were more "his people" because of their attitude toward him than because he had in any way chosen them. They were always ready to serve him, to come as close to him as he permitted, to work for him; they took all he had to give according to their individual preparation, and tried to help him in ordinary practical ways such as writing reports, typing, making telephone calls, talking with people who came to the lectures for the first time, and so forth. The small services we thus eagerly rendered him added a wealth of opportunities for us to work on ourselves, to the boon that we were receiving in exchange.

We were the people he had pushed, verbally lashed, abused, annoyed, banged about; the people who, he no doubt knew, respected, loved and tried to understand him as best they could. The people who, when he was at his worst as a taskmaker, felt that he was at this best trying to baffle them for the purpose of helping them to sharpen their wits, to learn to think on their

feet, to be impartial and to discover how to swallow in order to become strong.

It was my good fortune to be among these people. Yet his departure left me at a disadvantage. I tried to return to Mendham, but Madam did not permit it. It is quite possible that others from my group had the same experience, but I do not know. For myself, I blessed Madam for the wisdom of her decision even when I felt more at a loss in the days that followed, knowing that the miracle was over and assuming that this was the end for me since I never thought it would be possible to go on with the Work outside the general group.

I must explain here that I had gone to Mendham previously, and had come into contact with Madam Ouspensky. When she saw me for the first time she classified me on the spot as "the emotional Mrs. P. with nothing in her head." As I heard her words I had to admit that she was right, for from the very moment my eyes rested on her I felt that I loved her. My heart had leapt as though I had recognized her! I was emoting at the time, so this perception had nothing to do with reason. Perhaps the reaction was the result of the fear I had felt before meeting her because many described her as a "monster" in disguise, always ready to pounce purringly upon those who came to the big house and torture and taunt them. It seemed she had sensed my emotion.

However, my work with Mr. Ouspensky had conditioned me. I knew he was kind and understanding, even when he appeared to be at his worst. I knew from experience that he hit hard in order to save; that he wounded in order to heal, and so I took it for granted that Madam did as much. And I was correct.

In their team it was she who worked most on the emotional side of man. Her tactics were different, but the aim and the method were the same. And because my mind had accepted and understood, I felt full of grateful admiration for her and for the Work. It was impossible to undergo such emotional transformations as I underwent, to see others undergo them, without feeling in the depths of one's being the colossal sacrifice of gratitude and love on witnessing the colossal sacrifice of personality by Mr. Ouspensky and Madam Ouspensky in order to help others to stop being machines and to become men and women worthy of their Creator.

It was an unbelievably difficult task. Madam made herself

expressly disagreeable, reprimanding, aping, debunking, abusing, and unmasking everybody. Yet I realized, within the limits of my experience in any event, she always was a mirror of justice and never accused anyone wantonly or unjustly except for reasons of a much higher order than were apparent to others who were not involved in the little plays in which she would call upon this or that more advanced pupil to act impromptu for the benefit of the newcomers. She found the exact sore spot in one's makeup; always exposing sham, false personality, pride, vanity, conceit, forever attacking weakness and stupidity; she was as tart and acid in her talk as she was wise and profound in her judgment.

Madam's impact on the people who came to her for the first time was much deeper than that which Mr. Ouspensky made in equal circumstances. It is possible that when we came to her we knew what to expect, and came in fear of being torn apart or wishing to be torn apart and to have, perhaps, the first real look at ourselves. One approached Madam emotionally, either loving her or hating her, but there was no feeling of admiration toward her such as Mr. Ouspensky inspired; at least not among those I knew. Not to begin with, in any event. And yet, it was she who sacrificed herself daily for the sake of those within reach of her help! It was she who ran the risk of becoming a real shrew, and of losing her way in the bargain; she who could expect nothing but resentment from those she so lavishly helped. It was, however, a resentment that was short-lived in the hearts of those who stood their ground, because eventually one came to feel—just as one came to understand with one's mind in dealing with Mr. Ouspensky—that her heart was immense and she mothered us all, having undertaken the Herculean task of weaning us away from sham. And in carrying through her task she was constantly exposed to the danger of losing everything she had won through hard work on herself by merely half forgetting that she was only acting.

My personal work with Madam was far too short to satisfy me, but long enough for me to profit immeasurably from the generosity with which she gave of herself. I shall never forget the moments I spent near her. I had nothing but love and admiration for this remarkable woman when I saw her riding through the gardens in her old car while we worked in the fields; or when she came to

the dining room or the terrace while we ate lunch or had tea, to treat us all to her special brand of firework displays!

I can still feel the sensation that crept along my spine when I heard Madam approaching, her cane announcing her as she came closer and closer to the terrace or the dining room. Although small in stature, she loomed and towered above us all through the sheer strength and poise that radiated from her presence. When she reached the long narrow tables at which we sat, everyone remained motionless, eyes glued to one spot, simultaneously wishing to draw her attention and yet to become invisible to her. Each one of us was in readiness, conscious of her powerful presence, desperately trying to hold fast to our own shaking thread of presence, not knowing what to expect nor where the leash would fall, fastened to the spot as though held by a magnet, delighted to be there but almost wishing to take flight! And she would calmly take a seat at the head of one of the long narrow tables, surveying the assembly with extraordinarily calm and beautiful eyes; those limpid and penetrating eyes which laughed and sparkled while her tongue lashed.

It was not until years later, when I came into close contact with her Master, that I realized how much Madam received from him. From all the pupils in his original group that I have known she alone, through her presence, gave me the feeling, or rather the trace of the shadow of the feeling that took possession of my being in Mr. Gurdjieff's presence. In her power over people, in the depth of her presence, in deep magnetic appeal, in merciless humor and ready wit, in her extraordinary mimicking ability, Madam, to my knowledge, was undoubtedly the one of Mr. Gurdjieff's pupils who resembled him most or imitated him best, as the case may have been.

In the all too-short period of my proximity to Madam I never heard her say anything that was banal or superficial. This woman, for whom I had the strange feeling of having been waiting throughout the years long before I even knew she existed, had a profound influence on my life—this woman, who took my heart from me, and whom I, in turn, did my best to imitate so far as postures and gestures went. I cherished forever every word she spoke, and I imagine I can still hear her voice; not imparting the ideas and the knowledge that our revered Mr. Ouspensky gave us, but full of practical wisdom for use in ordin-

ary living. The "nu" that usually preceded her words, still rings lovingly in my ears.

"Never offer more information than has been asked of you," I hear her telling me now, as she did once, when, upon asking me whether I had brought some person into the Work I waxed eloquent to explain how that person had come to join us. I can still see her as she sat at the table, telling us how she had hated herself when she was in the same position in which we found ourselves now whenever she caught herself lying.

I asked, in surprise, "Did you say hate, Madam?"

And she replied, "Yes, hate. Love is a result—it is not an aim, Mrs. P."

Madam was never brutal or cruel to me until the time came to forbid my returning to Mendham. Then she was adamant. Had I not loved her and trusted her, I should have hated her. Mendham was, at the time, the only door that I wanted to see open to me. But she knew best. Circumstances were such then that it would have been psychologically detrimental for me to be there. I like to think that she knew it, and refused me accordingly. However, I never stopped loving her. Perhaps I loved her the more for her refusal to let me be weak; and her words, every word that she ever spoke to me, never ceased to influence me. I was thus well able to accept my ban from Mendham without bitterness and without argument for I always had the feeling that Madam understood. And irrespective of external appearances, irrespective of the trend of events, I felt safe in the certainty of her strength and of her wisdom.

How often I wished I had occasion to witness an encounter between Master and pupil! I am convinced that Madam would have stood as close in stature to his shadow as it was possible for anyone to come!

I shall never forget the personal struggle I underwent through the gamut of many emotions while working in turn with Madam and Mr. Ouspensky! I hated them, I loved them, I questioned their sanity, I extolled their wisdom, I sang praises to them, and I criticized them all at the same time but all along I was conscious of the fact that my life was more worthwhile because of them and of their work with myself and the group.

Years later, when Mr. Gurdjieff's conversations with Mr. Ouspensky were published in *In Search of the Miraculous*, I real-

ized that this struggle between "yes" and "no," had been a God-sent gift to those of us who had the good fortune to work with Madam and Mr. Ouspensky to undergo the inner clash that made it possible for us to begin to stir in our deep slumber.

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There followed a period of search for something that might—even in an insignificant way—fill the enormous void left by Mr. Ouspensky at his departure. Where to turn? Which way to look? Together with others from my former group, and with those left in similar circumstances as ourselves we made a pact to go everywhere in town to find some other group with whom we might associate. There was not a group in New York, religious, metaphysical, philosophical or theosophical that I did not try out in all good faith. There was not one among these groups that met the strict requirements which seven years of training with Mr. Ouspensky now made imperative.

There was one among the others who shared my disappointment, who phoned me several months later to let me know that she had ascertained that Mr. Gurdjieff was still living and might come to America soon. She said she had been in contact with one of his old pupils who had been with him in the same group as Madam and Mr. Ouspensky.

I was interested and astonished. I knew very little about Mr. Gurdjieff, and so far as I knew he was dead. Nobody had told me so, but I had taken it for granted and had never questioned this assumed fact. Actually I had never been particularly interested in the matter one way or another, since it was Mr. Ouspensky who had put a little sense into my mind. It was he who had given me the first glimpses of a knowledge that had enriched my life, and it was he who had brought about the expansion of my horizons—and what reason did I have even to think that any other man existed who had any concern with this?

But now the tables were overturned and things were in reverse. Now I began to listen with much interest to the reports that were abroad on the subject of these two men. Many things began to happen fast, and before long I became aware of the fact that the road was opening for me to return to the fold out of which I had been thrown.

Before that could come to pass a great battle would have to

be waged within myself, as was also the case with some of the others with whom I had been associating since Mr. Ouspensky's departure. His death was not only a shock to me, it was also a cataclysm. The stories that arose from it, the manner in which they came to my attention, the way in which our loyalty and our training were put to the test, all of these things set up a great struggle and jolted us out of our sleep.

I have mentioned the fact that the group with which I had been working—those who were not going to Mendham when Mr. Ouspensky left, as well as loose members of other groups of his whom we had met at the lectures or in the country—had banded together in an effort to find the way back into the fold, or at least not to lose contact with the ideas altogether. We met regularly, read and worked together as best we knew how.

Louise March, the vital person from Mr. Gurdjieff's people, who had been contacted by one of us, agreed to read with as many as cared to come, from Gurdjieff's book, *All and Everything*, which had not yet been published. This was necessary, in preparation for his coming, as it was by now quite certain that he would be in New York before long.

Now it became necessary to make a very serious decision. As I have said, some of us who had been left to our own devices still very strongly felt a connection with Mendham even though we were not going there. Still we did not want to lose contact with the Work, and we didn't want to act on our own. However, there was no one to advise us. We all had to wage an inner fight as to whether or not it was loyal to Mr. Ouspensky's memory and beneficial for us to consort with Mr. Gurdjieff. There was also an outer fight with other group members, which soon divided into those who opposed joining any activity that had to do with Mr. Gurdjieff, or even hearing about him, and those who felt they must try to find out for themselves what it was all about, and who wanted to reach their own conclusions and see the man with their own eyes and hear what he had to say.

Word had come that Madam had opened her doors to Mr. Gurdjieff, and that she had called him over to surrender to him the care of her flock. Some who were among those going to Mendham rebelled against her and left. Some people from our group did the same. Others accepted Madam's judgment both at Mendham and outside of Mendham. I was among the latter.

I trusted Madam Ouspensky. Moreover, I remembered that Mr. Ouspensky had always enjoined us not to believe anything we heard; he told us repeatedly to doubt everything, including what he said—in fact, particularly, what he said to us. Otherwise no development was possible in this Work, he had assured us.

Therefore I felt for myself that it was irrevocably right to become acquainted with Mr. Gurdjieff, and to ascertain whether he really knew as much as Mr. Ouspensky. I found difficult to believe this possibility since I had never heard of Mr. Gurdjieff and had no reason to presume that the System came through him or that he was the Master. So the readings began for me, full of reservations, doubts, and misgivings.

At first, when I heard those incredibly long chapters from the still unpublished *All and Everything*, I thought this was all a comedy of errors. I did not understand what it was all about. Nothing made sense except the fact that we were again together, that many people whom we knew and had not seen lately had come from near and far, that we again were struggling to form a group, and each one was eager to reestablish a lost connection with something extremely precious to us.

"It is all a lot of nonsense," I would say to myself. And I made a pest of myself inquiring about Mr. Gurdjieff and his activities, asking whether he really knew about the Ray of Creation and Recurrence, about the Law of the Octave, the Enneagram, the Chemical Laboratory. I was assured that he was the source of all this knowledge; that Mr. Ouspensky had been his pupil. But when I heard the readings further I began to harbor great doubts about everybody's sanity, especially about my own sanity, faithfully appearing at reading after reading to listen to all this unexplainable nonsense. Yet the pleasure of being together with the others, the *esprit de corps*, the total void of life without the Work, the possibility of returning sometime to Mendham—all these lured me on and combined to keep me reading, "at least for a little while longer," as I would say to myself.

But as the readings proceeded I decided to apply the principles I had learned from Mr. Ouspensky. I wondered: "Is there something else hidden in all this, something that would benefit me considerably if I were really to understand it, as for instance, the profit I gained from finally deciphering the Chemical Labora-

tory? What could it be? Is it possible that by reading this nonsense three times at least, as is suggested, I may be able to grasp whatever it is that escapes me now? How could a man like Mr. Ouspensky, and a woman of Madam's stature follow the person who wrote all this unless he was really a person of unusual being? Would it, perhaps, be written in this manner for the express purpose of testing one's patience, of fostering understanding in the same manner as our dear Mr. Ouspensky put us to the test in more intelligible if belligerent ways?"

I thank my stars that when these preliminary readings were over I took sides with those who chose to reserve judgment and to wait in order to find out personally what Mr. Gurdjieff was like.

The debates, discussions, and accusations of disloyalty blossomed once more; there came the severance of old ties that were dear, but not dear enough to sacrifice one's right to doubt and search—yet still heartrending. And now, several persons who remained, including myself, joined a group under one of Mr. Gurdjieff's leaders, a kind and brilliant man, who himself came to exercise a great influence in my life since he was the gardener who tilled, watered, and cared for the soils that was I, in which Mr. Ouspensky had sown the seed which was later to become the feeble, insignificant but living Work plant which sprouted under the strong life-giving rays of the Sun that was Mr. Gurdjieff.

This man was Wim Nyland. He made us read *All and Everything* all over again. We read these never-ending chapters now in circumstances that were uncomfortable, sitting on hard wood benches that had no backs; having to climb six flights of rickety stairs to a cold railroad flat, where our own efforts to keep the small stove lit availed very little against the low temperatures prevailing outside and the drafts that swept all over the place. It was here that we began our preparation to meet Mr. Gurdjieff. But we heard little about him. Up until that time we had merely read his book with no questions being asked, and there were no matters at all coming up for discussion.

We had just finished reading the book, when two men arrived from France on Mr. Gurdjieff's behalf to further pave the way for his coming. By now we were all agog with excitement and curiosity, counting the days until his arrival. These two men

came to inject new enthusiasm into us all, as well as new hope into those of us who still doubted that the System could be taught by anyone other than Mr. Ouspensky.

One of them had been among Mr. Ouspensky's closest and advanced pupils from London. He had led the groups, answered questions, and given instructions under Mr. Ouspensky, and many of us knew him; he had answered our own questions quite a few times. When we saw him we experienced a feeling of relief; his companion was Alfred Etievan, who had come expressly to prepare everybody who wanted to be thus prepared to do the "movements" in order to be able properly to work with Mr. Gurdjieff.

We, from the old Mr. Ouspensky's group, went now into an entirely new experience. We were introduced en masse to the intricacies of Mr. Gurdjieff's obligatories, temple dances, dervish prayers, and coordination movements of all sorts. This was something entirely different from what we had expected; we, who had looked forward to more talks and to further comments on the diagrams and the ideas that had taken good hold of our minds and of our hearts!

All talking had been set aside by this time; this was true of the diagrams also. No intellectual questions were heard from anyone, let alone answered. Whoever wished to do so was welcome to hear the readings of *All and Everything*, and to do the movements. It was a great privilege, we were assured, for there were many people interested in doing them who had never had the opportunity that was now opened to us. It was necessary for us to make our moving center ready also, for it needed a taste of discipline. In fact all these long months of preparation, reading while we sat on our hard backless wooden benches for three or more hours at a time, listening to dull voices read in a dull monotone from a book that made no sense to anyone, depriving ourselves of cigarettes while we were thus engaged, struggling against sleep (we were tired after an ordinary working day), against cold, against hunger (because we frequently read when we should have been eating our dinner and could not eat until the reading was over, almost by 9 o'clock P.M.), struggling against bodily needs, since we could not excuse ourselves to attend to the call of our physical apparatus while the reading was in progress—all these inconveniences, and still others

which I need not enumerate, were a form of preparation and, to a very great extent, represented part of the payment we had to make for the privilege of working with the incomparable "Dancing Master," the great magician Mr. Gurdjieff.

And a privilege it was indeed! We worked at an unbelievable pace, twisting, whirling, taking positions entirely unheard of, and never taken by any of us before; we learned to break associative movements, to coordinate, to dissociate coordinations, to tax our memory with words and sequences and numbers and rhythms entirely unfamiliar to us.

And now the time came to carry on the disciplining of our bodies at a studio hall that was rented for the purpose. There we would stay for two or three hours at a time, counting, pacing, chopping, rotating, changing places, whirling, jumping, going through routines we had never thought possible for anyone, particularly anyone in this group as we all were well in our middle age. Soon our bodies began to respond; already there was a semblance of harmony and order in our coordinated movements, when the moment for which we had hoped came unannounced: the people from Mendham joined us in the studio hall early one evening. They were all there, those we had not seen in months, among whom we had always felt that we belonged, and who, logically enough, had severed all relations with us since Mr. Ouspensky's departure, fearing Madam's wrath if they did not.

It was a solemn moment, pregnant with meaning and emotion—a moment that brought me a surprise: I was now free from these people as people. I was no longer identified with them. They searched. I sought. We were going in the same direction. We were now together where we had been separated a while back. That was all.

We worked and did what we could. For me, I can say that it was more for the sake of doing group work, of working with others, than because I had any understanding of what I was doing.

And then came one evening when, in the middle of a whirling exercise, I heard a heavy tread in the distance. It was far away from where we stood doing our movements. In fact it could not yet be heard in the lower part of the studio but only outside in the hall of the building. A tread that was portentous, massive, whole.

I did not know who it was, since he had just arrived that morning and his visit to the studio had not been announced. But all along my spine the same sensation crept that I knew at Mendham when Madam approached, and I simply knew that Mr. Gurdjieff was coming: I felt it in my bones. And I was right. It was not long before he showed up. His presence absolutely pervaded the space between him and us. His power in this respect was indescribable, so far as I was concerned.

Mr. Gurdjieff exuded poise and inner strength; he commanded immediate respect, and arrested one's attention. I understood at once why no one could ignore his presence wherever he might be; once they had seen him, human eyes could not be easily diverted from him nor could one be insensible to the feeling of fascination he evoked. Indeed, he was the Master!

He went at once into his superbly silent, though frequently garrulous teaching routines, and had us whirling in perfect harmony or in pandemonium as the situation might call for. It is not an experience of which one can speak in so many words, but no person touched by his wizard's rod could ever be the same again! It was not necessary to study with him for years on end in order to earn and receive the brand that stamped one as his pupil. Even once would have sufficed to feel his influence, had one actually come to him without any preconceived antagonism. And his influence for that single time would have been strong enough to make itself felt for the rest of a person's lifetime. One could never have forgotten him.

As for me, I know that I loved him from the moment I saw him. I saw kindness and compassion in his flashing eyes. From these two impressions surprised admiration and loyalty were born in me. This must have opened the fountains of my understanding, otherwise he could not have cut so deeply into my heart and reached into the marrow of my bones in so short a while!

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The movements in general, and some of them in particular, are like snowflakes: each a thing of beauty, complete in itself, original in its unique pattern. Each pattern discernible only to those who examine it through the microscope of their own essence; the entire ensemble a great blanket of life, alike yet different, graceful always, like falling snow.

So far as my negative emotions were concerned the therapeutic value of the movements was immense. It was not in vain that Mr. Gurdjieff called himself simply a Teacher of Dancing. Dancing indeed, but on what level! Through the movements he bared their souls to his dancers, he unmasked them, forced them to see themselves in their stark nudity, at the same time he lifted them up from the mud in which they waddled, providing them with these charts to higher places in themselves from which they could begin to do his work.

To work with Mr. Gurdjieff at the movements was something indescribable, judging from my own very limited experience when he was in New York for the last time. It was on the floor of the movement hall that he became alive with the fire that burned in him; he rose magnificent before our very eyes, dictating movements, changing rhythms, spotting mistakes, lashing orally while we stood at attention, ready to follow his every gesture; changing from one number to another, giving fast explanations on the spot, never compromising, demanding more and more effort, playing no favorites, urging understanding. Mr. Gurdjieff exuded vitality and power, he vibrated with energy which he transmitted unsparingly both to those who danced at his command and to those who watched the movements. His gaze moved ablaze in all directions, and brought everyone's thoughts, emotions, and movements into one single simple point of togetherness and effort.

To me it was a real discovery to understand—for myself, that is—that the “struggle of the Magicians,” that famous ballet which had fired people's imagination and for which many had been expectantly waiting since they first heard of Mr. Gurdjieff in one way or another, was actually being staged all along within each one of us—the constant dance of all our “I's,” that motley plurality that forms our personality. Meanwhile Conscience sleeps within us and there is no one to witness the performance, there is no public to see it: her entire Court sleeps with our princess. And Consciousness, the prince who will bring awareness and life, is still far away!

I see quite clearly why the ballet, “Struggle of the Magicians,” never took place within anyone's recorded recollection. I feel it is because the whole pattern of the Work to which Mr. Gurdjieff gave birth, and which still flourishes around his

memory now that he has gone, is itself the famous ballet he advertised and which brought so many persons to him, intrigued by his advertisements—the ballet for which they waited throughout the years to materialize; the ballet in which all of us become White and Black Magicians in turn to have a gargantuan struggle with ourselves in an effort to neutralize our negativity and become White Magicians on reaching somewhat higher levels through unrelenting work on ourselves. Naturally enough, this ballet is never staged: it is our personal ballet and we cannot see it, although we work on it daily just the same. And here lies the beauty of it all, the truth that becomes apparent when one has felt the full impact of the movements in every cell.

Since Mr. Gurdjieff first mapped his own way and started working toward his personal aim he apparently began tracing his plan on the basis of the Law of Otherwise. Perhaps he never intended to stage any ballet; had he meant to stage it he would have done so, since he was a person for whom the impossible did not seem to exist except for the purpose of overcoming it. That is, certainly he did not mean to stage it "as is customary." Meanwhile the entire world became his stage; the play was prepared, the choreography was ready, and the dancers began to train for the great event, in the persons of all the people in his groups, from the very beginning to our times, holding constant rehearsals of the entire ballet, keeping it alive and glowing in the recesses of their own hearts.

Mr. Gurdjieff kindled the fires of imagination through his talk about his coming ballet, and all the time he saw it in progress in the actions of each member of his troupe both individually and collectively.

It is natural, since the movements were and are always being taught, that many persons believed that they were preparing for the day when the Great Ballet would be staged in all its glory. Others, already disappointed at the failure of the ballet to take shape, accuse Mr. Gurdjieff of speaking nonsense, or wonder why he spoke about the ballet at all, pondering whether he wished to mislead people merely for the purpose of inviting attention to himself and to his groups.

Mislead. . . what an inadequate thought! The Law of Otherwise has no room for misleading. There is at no time any intention to "lead" away from anything but rather the express effort is to

"lead to something." But each one must find something for himself, and that which the searcher finds is the truth at that particular moment for that particular individual. Anything else would be of the nature of what is accepted from another, from hearsay, taken on faith. It is my feeling that Mr. Gurdjieff never misled anyone but merely used the Law of Otherwise to further his own work, and at the same time to make the System available to the individuals that came to form his groups.

As I mentioned before, when he made his first appearance among us in my group at the Studio where we practiced the Movements we all stood frozen into attention by his presence.

He ordered us to try dancing the first part of certain movement exercises "like black magicians." I understood him to say that we were to make ugly faces, hideous grimaces, and inharmonious gestures: the worse, the ugliest that we thought we could manifest to picture anger, fear, envy, lust, vanity, and pride.

Everybody began to move back and forth in a frenzy of changes in positions and tempo, whirling past one another with satanic fury, making detestable faces. When the exercise began, I too started whirling. But as I saw the faces around me, I found it impossible to force myself to act. I felt myself rooted to the ground all of a sudden. I was unable to move, and the whirling figures went about and around me like mad. I began struggling to make my way to the front out of the dancing lines through all this dancing fury. Finally I succeeded in what it seemed to me to be ages. I came out by the armchair on which Mr. Gurdjieff sat. I had been prepared for a blast of abuse from him, but now I felt reassured.

I looked up at him, our eyes met, and I found myself. Instantly I saw my state of superstition, my identification with all the things that I had read about witches and demons and devils and such. I had been unable to make grimaces because I was afraid of becoming a black magician just by making faces. I was not free. I was a slave to this stupid fear. And what indeed was a black magician, what did I understand by a witch? Nothing at all. I was a puppet, being pulled by the shreds of tales and stories heard in my childhood.

This was a very deep experience and I understood so much in such a short time! I was still looking into the depths of myself

when I saw the dancers change at his command and the White Magicians now appeared. They were the same people: the movements, however, were beautiful now; they were harmonious, soft, flowing, and they evoked feelings of love and compassion, of piety and awe. And I saw more and more into myself, realizing that these, too, were just terms I had heard, seen, and read here and there; that I knew nothing about their real meaning and had always taken them for granted as given, without ever even knowing if I had felt these emotions at all.

This happened at the very beginning of Mr. Gurdjieff's arrival in New York. I always bless the moment when it took place, for I was never again the same idiot. An idiot I have remained throughout the years, but not the same kind of idiot. I saw then something about which I had never dreamed. Thenceforth my aim centered on getting to know myself better and better; on seeing things about me to which I had closed my eyes, or which I had never expected to find in myself. In fact our work—at least my work—with Mr. Ouspensky had been very intense, but emphasis had been above all on self-remembering, on endeavoring to awaken the mind to understand the wealth of ideas that he had placed so generously on our lap. But I had done no routine work on myself, no directed exercises on self-observation. I had accepted the need for these because they seemed desirable to me, just as I had thought about the ideas he had given because I found them interesting. Nothing else.

When Mr. Ouspensky had told us that we must observe ourselves because psychology means, first of all, "to know oneself," I felt that this must be so and that it was important. I tried to observe myself as best I could in ordinary conditions involving my likes and dislikes; but real, actual work on self-observation, my struggle with myself in this respect did not begin in full force for me until after Mr. Gurdjieff's arrival here.

No doubt it was I who had not been ready as yet for this phase of the Work, but this is how it was until this moment came of which I speak, and I had this experience to contribute to the group with which I worked at the time. My leader, Mr. Nyland, knew thoroughly well how to share with those whom he led and how to pass on to them his vast knowledge regarding impartial self-observation.

Yet it was long, very long, before it became possible for me to try to sense as to be present to my tensions when I assumed ordinary postures or made gestures according to my state of mind so as to be able eventually to observe them. I was told again that each person has a limited number of postures to match his every attitude, thought, emotion; postures peculiar to himself, which go unnoticed most of the time. Now it meant something to me. I began to recognize the taste peculiar to my gamut of emotions: fear, anger, pride, despondency, revenge, compassion, affection, surprise, and elation. As I made efforts to observe myself less subjectively, as I learned to do the movements with my body after releasing my mind from the needless task of following step by step the order in which I moved and began to observe without thinking that my body moved, I began to see the connection that existed—for myself—between the movements as I performed them in the exercise hall and my own everyday personality movements.

And the realization came that the wry faces, the grimaces, and violent gestures and grins that were my personal lot were exactly the same as those I had seen portrayed on the faces of the dancers whom I had been loath to join when Mr. Gurdjieff had us whirling at the Carnegie Hall Studio in an attempt to experiment with his "Struggle of the Magicians."

No wonder I had refused to move! I had not wished to face myself, and had hidden behind superstitions and taboos to justify my refusal. But now I was free. I had to see the black magician within myself; to see all my negative grimacing, shrilling, screeching "I's" with which I had to struggle for life from now on in order to save my sleeping princess from their grip until the time came for her awakening.

This thought has helped me to struggle against my negative thoughts, attitudes, and emotions; the thought that I, myself, am one of the stages in which Mr. Gurdjieff's ballet goes on all the time. There are moments when my White Magicians call a victory and close the doors altogether against the intruding marauders that are their opposites. I have learned to smell their approach, for they come and go otherwise unseen, like real magicians. But I have learned to parry, to sense their proximity, and this I have done exactly through the repertoire of gestures,

grimaces, wry faces, and screeching or hoarse sounds that denounce their coming.

The movements help me greatly in this respect. They help me to fix the tension, to find the posture particular to myself, that brings about release from negativity or capture by it. Many times I am about to speak harshly, when a swinging forth of my arm—a gesture I have already identified as a personal one of incoming irritability or anger—heralds the arrival of the Black Magicians. At once the tempo changes, the rhythm is altered, and White Magicians appear on the field of battle to overthrow the invaders.

And those of the movements that have become mine in a sort of three-centered fashion have proved to be weapons which I use in my struggle against the downpull of inertia. There are movements that I do to relax, others that I do to overcome despondence or sadness; those that awaken and quicken my desire to move on, my desire to live and, best of all, those through which my body prays while the whole of me lauds the Lord for the help that He saw fit to bring into my experience through the Teacher of Dancing, His extraordinary servant, George Ivanitch Gurdjieff.

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In thus speaking about the Movements I do not wish to create the impression that I know a great deal about them—their origin, their meaning, their purpose. I speak about them merely on the basis of my personal experience, as I have done them and thought about them and understood them for myself. I speak from my own very simple and practical level. This is precisely the level at which, to the best of my knowledge, there is nothing to rival our System; the System for those who live and struggle in the midst of life, in the World, who cannot give up either their duties or their pleasures to search for guidance in the realms of the Monk, the Yoga, or the Fakir, to enter which it is first necessary that man give up everything.

My first encounter with the Movements was in the nature of a challenge. I had never done or seen them. I had never been particularly interested in physical exercises, and certainly had never suspected that such uncoordinated sequences, such complicated gyrations could be tackled by a simpleton like myself. When I was launched into them, together with some others who

had already done Movements, and also with many other novices like myself I found that I had to give undivided attention to the instructions given us in order to be half able to try to follow them. It was not possible for my attention to waver; because one lost moment—and I would lose all track of where I was. No imitation is possible in the Movements. Rows and files move constantly, differently, position changes flow like running water and, at the beginning especially, one does not know which way to look. Everyone is enjoined against imitating and urged to make mistakes of his own in preference to moving adroitly and on time in imitation of someone else. But even with the best intention to imitate it would be difficult to do it, considering the nature of the Movements themselves.

Moreover, I soon found out that “considering” was out of the question. Once I had of my own volition taken my stand where I stood, I could not worry about the impression I might be creating on the teacher, or on the persons who watched, or on those who whirled around with me. I could not “consider” them, and try to move sensibly and to follow instructions as soon as imparted.

I find this very impossibility to give any thought to ordinary life interests while engaged in practicing of great therapeutic value. It results in complete relaxation, irrespective of how strenuous the Movements themselves may be in a given number. Whoever comes with heavy thoughts, or thoughts of any kind to do the Movements, must necessarily leave them outside the Movement Hall before sitting on the floor to await instructions. Thus it is possible to spend a full two hours practicing in what, as regards everyday cares and anxieties, is a real paradise into which they find no admission. And in the absence of considering, one eventually does what one is doing and learns the Movements with at least a certain degree of personal accuracy. I found that this effort left in me an inner accumulation of energy that subsequently made itself felt in life as poise and physical ability to withstand difficulties without fanciful emotional entanglements.

Of course this was so in my case. I realize that we are all made differently yet all of us in my Movement Group discussed our experiences freely, and I readily saw that most of us reacted in a like manner. Off and on, some persons may have reacted otherwise due to individual inner disturbances somewhat beyond

the pale of our everyday normality, but they always left the Movements, either of their own accord or by advice, certainly much before they could have had even an inkling of the fabulous wealth they were rejecting.

It always surprised me to note that the handful of this kind of people that I knew throughout the years always seemed to feel that it was the Movements instead of themselves who were wanting in "something." Nevertheless, it was they for the most part who daydreamed about the "powers" that could be developed through Eastern teachings, who wanted to become magicians, black or white, and who, so far as discipline went, were too weak-willed or too preoccupied with their own importance to give the Work a fair trial in their moving center.

In any event the Movements taught me how to relax in a way that would have seemed miraculous to me before. I also discovered that I had muscles which I had never felt I possessed. I learned to establish contact with them by sensing and tensing; I learned to assume postures which, although perfectly natural and easy for my body to take, I never took under ordinary life conditions, thus depriving myself of movement or limiting it to a very few meager gestures out of all the hundreds that are possible through combination of all limbs moving in unison in opposite and in entirely different ways.

The Movements taught me to see myself as I had never seen myself before. My blood circulated freely, perspiration was copiously healthful; not once did I come to do the Movements, tired and exhausted after a day of hard work and barely able to keep my eyes open, without leaving the class after practicing bubbling over with the feeling of well being, my muscles tingling with life, my eyes clear, my spirits high, and my emotions in perfect check. This is an experience in which all who do the Movements share alike when they do them with understanding, and surrender themselves to them, disregarding the "emotional swelling" that passes for real emotion in us.

We are told that the Work must be placed between life and ourselves. It was through the Movements that I was first able to put this into practice. My bogeyman was anger: my repertoire of gestures and grimaces for expressing it was itself very rich. Among the different arm and other positions that we took in the Movements I found many that made me aware of my own

useless gestures, and when I found myself in ordinary life, lost in cuffing and in buffeting I immediately became sober when the gestures, automatic as they were, awakened my body and my body in turn awakened the "I" in me that observed and it saw what was going on. This "I" called a "stop!" and the "stop," so rich in emotional content for me, eventually succeeded in giving me relative freedom from these exhausting manifestations in which I had been formerly so constantly involved.

Nor was this all that the Movements gave me on an entirely practical level. They also came to my help when I found my mind wandering, or when I became lost talking to myself at great length, worrying as to whether or not this or that event would come to pass, whether to act in this or in that manner, telling myself that I would put this or that person in his place, wondering what this or that one meant when she spoke such and such words to me or looked at me in this or that manner. Whenever I found myself lost in these idle manifestations I appealed to the Movements and began to make mental rehearsals of any one of the numbers that I knew and loved so well. I tried very firmly not to lose myself before bringing my mental task to an end; and since many of the Movements are done in cannon, and each row moves differently, I would have to take row after row, sometimes to count, at others to repeat certain words that accompany them, and the overall exercise would so engage my attention that it was impossible for me to wander very far off in mental flights of any other kind.

In this manner many of the Movements became very much mine to the extent that, so far as recollection goes, I can do and know Movements mentally and clearly see, besides my own self, the persons who stood alongside me in other rows and did the Movements with me at a particular time when I learned the particular exercise. I find that this is an excellent antidote to the tendency to waste energy through inner talking. The stock of Movements that become our own serves us for life; they return to us a thousandfold what we put into them. They represent insurance against negative boredom, a tonic for tired nerves, a help to relax overtension, a bane to worries, since two thoughts cannot hold sway in the mind simultaneously. And in one's declining years, or when Movements are no longer done in a group

they become a source of energy on which to draw daily to prepare oneself to start the day awake in a much better condition to begin the struggle against sleep and against oneself.

During the process of learning and doing them, the Movements endowed me with that inner quality that builds strength, endurance and resistance, fostering the ability to meet everyday life conditions that are boring, distracting, disagreeable, baffling, irritating. In this sense they became, for me, an extra weapon to use in the struggle against inner and outer situations that spell danger and have frequently offered me shelter and refuge from impending storms.

I have used the movements in many ways to work on myself. And I have been interested time and again in observing how some persons, particularly young ones who come to readings and make efforts to attend group meetings punctually without seeming to make any headway, suddenly become restless until they join a movement class and begin to bloom as their understanding of the Work grows by leaps and bounds and they respond to the feeling of companionship—of belonging together with others in the Work striving toward the common goal.

Into my own life, lacking in variety of daily impressions, as is true of most of us, Mr. Gurdjieff's sacred dances and ritual movements brought light of such magnitude that it is impossible to explain it to those who have never done and possibly never seen the movements. For even to see them is in itself an experience that can touch a person to the core of his being.

Of those who do the movements, it has been said that they "look like frightened mice." We exert such little efforts to be, we have such rare occasions to observe others engaged in so exerting them that we really have no sense of values in this direction. In ordinary dancing, in ordinary exercises, while we wonder about the impression we create on our audience, wishing to excel and to please, identified with our own actions, we may well indulge in pleasant smiles to show that we are aware of our public whose approval we desire. But in movements of the nature of Mr. Gurdjieff's work it is not possible to perform half satisfactorily at the same time that one indulges in dreams. One must work, and try to be present.

That work does not imply movements only. It calls for inner efforts to be exerted while the exercises take place. It would be

out of the question to give the impression of a jingling bell, to look like a lake swan while this happens. It just cannot be done.

If you wish to verify it, try a simple experiment. Recite aloud a simple poem that has emotional appeal, listen silently to every word uttered, and with each word make a movement, assume a posture, different in every instance—not opposite but different—now with this or with that, or with all members of the body. Add now a count; try to move the head at the count of two, the arms at the count of four, one leg after another in three counts. Throughout it all try hard to hold on to your attention; do not lose sight of the fact that it is you doing this exercise, that you do it because you wish TO BE. Try, then, to repeat it in sequence, from beginning to end or vice versa, or from the middle back and forth, or in any form you wish. It is very simple. You are not really working; you do not have to bother about cannons, you need not be on the alert for orders that must be carried out at once. You do not know what it means to work on yourself, to observe impartially, to separate from yourself, to see what you are doing without identification. Nobody is watching you; you need not take into account any effort to move in harmony with others who are not there at all.

But despite this simplicity, you will probably find yourself concentrating desperately on what you are doing—if you really wish to go through with your self-imposed task—so much so, that anyone watching you will surely tell you that you look like something much more unprepossessing than a frightened little mouse! You will learn a great lesson: you will understand from your own experience that it is not possible to pass judgment on the basis of surface appearances.

People usually ask whether there are books in which the various positions for the movements are shown; whether it is possible to learn them by heart. Rather not! Herein lies part of their hidden value. The movements are unexplainable, unpicturable. Their power lies in learning them, as they are dictated; in doing them, not for themselves, not for the sake of perfection or as a physical exercise, not for any kind of gain, but only for the sake of working on oneself, working with others and, in a larger sense, working for the Work by letting your own energy flow into the general pool of force through which the Work vitalizes and heals those who come into it.

It is not how you do the movements alone that counts; it is how much the activity means to you, how much you understand without being told. It is how they have touched you, how many of them have become so deeply ingrained into you that they could even withstand the shock of death in moving center memory. It is how strong a link they forge for you with others in our chain—those who have taught you, those with whom you worked. It is, best of all, the extent to which they help you to integrate all your other Work experiences, to realize the debt you owe that Teacher of Dancing, Mister Gurdjieff, who sought through these very movements to bring you close to harmony, to your Father Creator, to awaken in you the Wish To Be so as to repay your debt and “help mitigate the sorrow” of His Endlessness.

CHAPTER 7

Once I understood Mr. Gurdjieff to say that unless his Work is done from at least twenty-one different phases simultaneously it will not take one very far.

His words always come back to my mind, although actually I have never quite reached a conclusion as to what these twenty-one different phases of the Work might be. Here, too, I have found proof of the importance of working with others. By oneself, it is virtually impossible to explore all possibilities and to have all the checks needed to prevent imagination from carrying us overboard.

In any event, as is true of many others, I have also asked of those who love the Work, “Can you think of at least twenty-one ways in which one may work on oneself?”

Of course the only answer has been that there is no reason to limit the number of ways in which we may work on ourselves because we work in life, and life provides the numberless situations we require to engage constantly in our struggle since it is the very source of all the things that keep us in the hypnotic influence which we wish to escape; we must free ourselves in life without trying to escape it.

“Everything in the Work is related to everything else,” I understood Mr. Gurdjieff to say one day. “Some people have worked giving all attention to the Law of the Octave, others to the Law of Otherwise, and so on. This is wrong. Here in America,” he said motioning toward us, “you have worked only with self-remembering—now you are candidates for the insane asylum. You must think of all aspects of the Work.”

That evening at the Wellington, during Mr. Gurdjieff's last visit to New York, stands out clearly in my memory as a result of the following incident which took place even as Mr. Gurdjieff spoke of this necessity of making simultaneous efforts along all the lines that the Work offers.

As usual the living room was filled to capacity. A great many persons sat crosslegged on the floor. Among those who sat on

chairs there was a young woman whose enormous black hat completely blocked Mr. Gurdjieff's view from a few persons who sat directly behind her, particularly from an elderly lady who timidly asked her to remove her hat. The young woman turned around, looked steadily into the lady's eyes, and said very definitely, "No."

Although Mr. Gurdjieff was speaking at the moment, he did not miss a single iota of what had been going on.

All who saw this incident reacted; at least everybody within my sight and hearing at the moment. So did I. But I thought the young woman was trying to work on herself.

Following the meeting, and even up to the present time, many of those who were then present began tearing the young woman apart, despite the fact that when he had finished talking for that evening, and before going into the dining room for the usual repast, he had told us, "External considering is most important among your own selves. You are all brothers and sisters. You must consider externally."

How did we know whether this person who had refused to take her hat off was trying to work against her desire to please, he had asked. "Of course it was not common sense on her part to try to do this at the moment that she chose to do it," he went on to say, "but to judge her and to criticize her was out of place. Everybody should try during the coming week to say 'no' in difficult circumstances, and then could pass judgment," he suggested.

I began looking for an opportunity to say "no" at will, immediately after leaving the Wellington that evening. It came on the following day, as I was on my way back to the hotel.

I entered a bus to take me to my destination and noticed there were two persons sitting in the back seat, one at either window on each side of the bus. The middle space was empty. Not all the other seats in the bus were taken, but only the three back middle seats could be had together. I purposely sat in such a manner as to divide them, and warmly hoped that some couple might come and ask me to move aside so that they might sit together. I did not have long to wait. A young Chinese couple did come in. And as I had hoped, they came straight to me expecting to be able to sit together. Very politely they asked me to move.

"No," I replied.

No sooner had I heard the word spoken than I felt my face turning red-hot. I was altogether miserable. Needless to add that the young couple frowned upon me in surprise, while several of our fellow passengers in the bus cast disparaging glances in my direction, nodding their aggregate heads in condemnation of my lack of courtesy. And there I sat, unconcerned to all appearances, looking straight ahead of me, head high in the air, giving no doubt the impression of haughtiness, yet feeling like a mouse and exerting every effort to avoid becoming identified with my feeling.

Through this experience I learned a lesson. For, irrespective of provocation, I have never since judged anybody's motives *prima facie*. This is true particularly of people in our Work, since I never can tell when they may be working on themselves.

This experience was also fruitful for me in overcoming inner considering to a very large extent, which in turn helped me to cancel inner accounts previously made. I was enriched from beginning to end. No amount of book reading or lecture attending could have given me this firsthand knowledge that came through my personal efforts and intentional suffering.

I realized, among other things, that this is one of the reasons why our Work must be done under a leader, and that we must work with others; it is then that we are obliged to work on ourselves, to confront ourselves with our invented personalities, to struggle with our own stupidity, to come to terms with ourselves.

Moreover, it is through experiences of this kind that we are enabled to help others. In my case it has since made it possible for me to come to the assistance of many persons who suffer a great deal on account of other people in the Work because of their way of looking or of acting. When I hear complaints about our leaders or other group members, I always try to cancel them with the Law of Otherwise.

To the general lamentation, "Why are people so impolite as to pass me by as though I were a stranger? Why do people in the Work use it as a shield to act as they please without giving external considering to others?"

I always try to say that the Work is actually about becoming different, about a change in being; when people in general or in particular do not acknowledge my presence, and it bothers me,

I conclude that my efforts to work on myself are wanting, inasmuch as the Work asks me to try my wings to work on myself, and I must assume that others understand this and will appreciate the opportunity that they offer me when they work on themselves at my apparent expense.

I shall never be grateful enough for having been freed in this way, little by little, of the chains forged in me by inner considering; at least such inner considering as I used to do before the Work came to show me the way out of it.

This in itself would be sufficient, were it all that I had profited by my many years of lip and active service to our truly extraordinary emancipating Work!

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A distinguished South American writer—to whom I mentioned the fact that some of his concepts had already been voiced by Mr. Gurdjieff in *All and Everything*—indignantly protested, exclaiming with evident disgust, "How can you compare my teachings with the inane sayings contained in a book such as *All and Everything*?"

True enough, I thought, at his words. How idiotic of me to imagine that a sleeping person could bestow on any statement the quickening value with which they were endowed by the incredibly vast understanding of the incomparable Mr. Gurdjieff!

"*All and Everything* cannot be taken seriously," said this same individual on the same occasion.

I agree with him. It cannot be taken seriously precisely because most of us do not try to see beyond appearances. And yet this book gives us one of the soundest clues to the validity, the virility, the vitality of that System which we study, and which no person can ever approach without becoming either engrossed in it or strongly opposed to it but never indifferent to it. Mr. Gurdjieff was not the man whose ideas could be met with indifference. He had the strange ability of evoking the most varied emotions in people. Indifference was not one of them.

The book refers to the clue of which I speak, as the law of Otherwise. In other words, things are not as they appear to be but "otherwise." And what in the Work is called "otherwise," serves to foster understanding, to test and to transmit knowledge,

to whet one's essence thirst for being. It serves these and other purposes as well.

Indeed, who has not thrilled at the realization that something was being said or done within one's sight, something that was quite natural and ordinary yet could be understood "otherwise"? Who, among those who have tasted this experience, has failed to thrill in exercising the ability to reason "otherwise," seasoning his thoughts with wonder to produce the rich discovery that lay hidden behind appearances that disguised what was supposed to be?

The chapter on the Law of Otherwise in *All and Everything* apparently holds the answer to many situations that arise in our Work.

My understanding is that this law saw the light in very ancient times when learned beings of those days, wishing to make sure that "fragments of knowledge then existing," and selected by them for transmission, would pass on to future generations, consciously introduced inaccuracies at given intervals, based on the Law of 7, into otherwise perfect performances, works of art, constructions, religious observances, and so forth. They reasoned that the persons who noticed these inexactitudes would not mechanically take them for granted but would pause to ponder and reflect, thereby coming to an understanding of certain truths that might otherwise escape them.

And it seems to me that the application of this law to ordinary life situations in our Work calls for a great deal of "being efforts" on the part of everyone who becomes involved in them.

This brings to my memory occasional lecture nights with Mr. Gurdjieff's famous pupil, Mr. Ouspensky, when he would feign to be asleep while he sat waiting for questions. It usually took place on evenings when new people were invited; particularly new people of high station in circles intellectual, social, or otherwise influential. He would sit, head resting on his chest, but rousing up now and then to inquire with cocked eye, through thick glasses, and in a raucous voice, "What is that?"

And when the question was repeated, he would answer in the same way, "I do not understand. Next."

He would keep it up for as long as he felt like it, until some persons would begin to leave the Studio. When he knew that most

of them were gone, he would spring back to life and ask of those who remained, "Who left?"

And on being informed, the trace of a smile would come over his face. He would then proceed to speak of the choicest subjects I ever heard him broach.

Mr. Ouspensky did not speak in any way of this law, so far as I can remember. However, he taught it to us in action, and, in my case, it was exactly this Law of Otherwise, then nameless, that made the crack through that enabled the dawn of comprehension to finally filter into me. This law, and the challenge it presented to me in situations "in reverse," so to speak, certainly affected my life.

It is an extraordinary law, and particularly difficult to apply and regulate, inasmuch as it is altogether creative, intentional, a manifestation on man's part in which he cannot validly engage except insofar as he tries to be conscious. The weakest attempt to try to put this law into action will reveal the depth of thought that is needed, the presence of mind required, the nature of the understanding indispensable, successfully to manipulate it.

Of course I have seen "otherwise" understood and applied on many different levels. This is as it should be, or it would not be the great law that it is. But irrespective of level, its application—when I have been involved—has never failed to remind me of my mechanicalness, to serve as an incentive to exert a special effort "to be" or to "try to do."

I remember, on the simplest level, how often I have tried to answer a question affirmatively while moving my head in negation, or vice versa. It has never failed. People look at me in astonishment and for a moment do not quite know what to make of it; whether to take a spoken "yes," or my gesticulated "no" for an answer. A friend of mine on whom I tried it once because I had been given it as a task, told me later that I had completely disrupted her day by manifesting in this way when she had asked me, "Will you have some coffee?"

"You threw me off," she complained, "and for some reason it bothered me all week."

But so far as my own personal effort goes the task is not an easy one, and for those who think otherwise all I can say is that each can find out for himself provided that he has a feeling of the great value of these apparent absurdities. Try to do anything

at all "otherwise" than you know it is done and you will meet an unbelievable resistance in yourself; you will forget about it, you will find excuses for forgetting it, for not doing it, for everything; you will undoubtedly succeed in seeing yourself, if you observe impartially, from entirely new angles and in ways you never suspected.

I often think that this great law was in action, to a great extent, in Mr. Gurdjieff's life. He is accused, blamed, for having been present, for having been absent, for helping and for refraining from helping, for talking or for being silent, when a variety of events ranging in people's imagination from rape to taking the veil, from natural death to suicide, from bankruptcy to brilliant success took place in the lives of this one or that one of his followers.

But how poorly understood was the Great Magician! He had given utter dedication to the Work that he served with every fiber of his being. And what does the Work demand of us in order that we may remember that we do not remember, that we may work for the "I" in ourselves? That we try to keep awake by means of tasks that we or others give us to do?

But who was there to give tasks to Mr. Gurdjieff? And what task would be good enough to put Mr. Gurdjieff to a test? What would be too much for him, too taxing for his will and endurance, or of any use to his work on himself?

Nothing short of the eternal imbecility of his fellow creatures; these could be depended upon to supply him with the best: Let him place himself in conditions overwhelmingly difficult, ridiculous, unfavorable to himself; let him act "apparently" in a way as to arouse doubts regarding his sincerity, even his sanity; let him place himself in the worst possible light. To emerge whole from it all, to overcome shortsighted antagonism, readiness to condemn him, unwillingness to give him the benefit of the doubt—this would be a test, a constant reminder, useful to a man of his mettle. This would be the task of tasks, the role he well could, and possibly did play.

When I consider the possibility of Mr. Gurdjieff having consciously played this lowly role, my admiration for him knows no bounds. For this master role was profitable to himself through overcoming, and profitable to those of his followers who struggled to understand; to those among them who entertained doubts

about his sanity, about his honesty; to those who believed in him even if they did not understand him; to those who really wanted to work; to those who abused him yet wondered. Each one had to face the struggle between "yes" and "no" in himself.

Was Mr. Gurdjieff a cruel man, or was he not? Was he a real teacher, or a quack? Would they put up with him, or leave him? Was he a liar, or could he be trusted? Was he a devil, or a saint?

Meanwhile everyone grew through this inner friction, irrespective of the conclusion at which he may have arrived regarding the man who "taught nothing, but provided situations in which people could work on themselves."

* * *

When I express my admiration of the Mr. Gurdjieff who had become what he was by the time I met him when he last visited New York, there are persons who exclaim with indignation, "But you did not know him when he was young. He was a devil."

Perhaps he was a devil. But the point is that he had redeemed himself. And no doubt "the errors of his fiery youth," as Beelzebub says in *All and Everything*, "had to be atoned for."

Indeed, wasn't Mr. Gurdjieff a man like the rest of us when he started on the great search in which we also later engaged through him? Did he not, like ourselves, start out eager to find the pearl of great price, to learn on his way how to outwit the dragons, djins, witches, and evil spirits dwelling in the wilderness, the deserts and caves within himself through which he had to pass? But didn't he gather in that manner the rich treasure of knowledge that he shared with us? He, too, had to learn; he too, had to work hard on himself—possibly harder than anyone will ever know. This is true of many great saints also, who were not paragons of virtue from the very beginning but had to fight the devil in themselves. That was their work; it is our work; it was his work also. Mr. Gurdjieff had to work on himself for the change in being that turned him from what he was to what he wished to be.

I see no reason to begrudge this great man the right to do the noble work on himself, to begrudge it to him, of all people, who so generously provided opportunities for everyone who wished to do likewise, to receive transfusions of his blood energy of wisdom, who taught dexterity and litheness, who helped one to keep

awake, if only to dodge the whip he so judiciously and profitably cracked most of the time. When we fell under it, was it not because our footing was insecure?

Many blamed him bitterly for their personal failures and mistakes, accused him of being inconsistent, of all things! Certainly I do not know what this meeting with Mr. Gurdjieff, Mr. Ouspensky, and the System they taught us did for anyone except myself. About the way in which they affected my life I can speak, and will say that this very "inconsistency" brought about, in my case, the dawn of understanding.

As I have mentioned, although Mr. Ouspensky did not speak in so many words of the existence of this Law of Otherwise it was constantly in operation throughout the training that he gave us. And when the moment came to apply it to Mr. Gurdjieff's apparent inconsistencies, to give him the benefit of the doubt in any situation that arose from the unexpected application of this law, to accord the same benefit to anyone in the Work offending for similar reasons—I somehow remembered my training and used it to work on myself, especially when conditions baffled my understanding.

In my case, this effort helped me to pave the way to the full appreciation; and, for me, correct evaluation of events that transpired in our Work, with our people, under this law.

Mr. Gurdjieff himself tells us, in the chapter about The Arousing of Thought in his book, *All and Everything*, that ever since he first began to distinguish the "Z's" from the "A's" he did everything—but absolutely everything—"otherwise" than those bipeds like himself, "destroyers of Nature's bounty." He referred to the shock that gave birth to this attitude in him as the first of the three epoch-marking episodes in his life; it came as the result of his dying grandmother having enjoined him to "do everything differently than others do it."

Mr. Gurdjieff speaks in detail of the manner in which he put her advice into practice; how he would even play "otherwise" than other children; how even when he was anxious to eat some candy, he would first bring it to his ear to listen to it, or hold it to his nose to smell it, and so on. In this way he started early to block his mechanicality by means of "intentional suffering"; something which, I rather think, would reflect itself years later in the formation of his extraordinary force and will.

I find this experience of Mr. Gurdjieff's most significant. As a start, it certainly gave him an edge on his contemporaries so that in his "responsible age," as he calls it, he must have been well along on the way to master the remarkable serenity, the power to do, the dynamic vitality that characterized his extraordinary person. For it is easy to understand that anyone engaged consciously in exercising patience, will, efforts to direct attention, from such a tender age had necessarily to be the possessor of very special attributes on reaching young manhood.

In any event it is quite evident that Mr. Gurdjieff went on doing everything "otherwise," as he tells us himself. I fail to see why there are so many people who seem to forget this fact when they pass judgment on him and his actions and his conduct, and his relations with other people—most of whom had come to his groups of their own volition for help.

It is evident that a man who acquires mastery over himself and his manifestations brings about a change in the state of his being. No matter how ordinary the level of idiocy to which he may belong, this change soon shows itself in an inner poise and understanding of himself and of others that may be translated into at least a semblance of so-called power. It is not necessarily power over others; it is power over oneself. This power implies freedom from the stupid manifestations of other people, from their opinion. Consequently it implies ability to remain unconcerned and untouched by the foibles and hysterical outbursts of others in general; to see way beyond their intentions; to diagnose their instability and their inability to stand straight on their own feet; to gage their inner emptiness.

It seems to me that even the slightest gain in inner fortitude is a successful vaccine against outside compulsions. In a man like Mr. Gurdjieff, whose inner stability had undoubtedly reached heights beyond our comprehension by the time he came into my experience, it was natural for this power to make itself felt. Perhaps by now he had no interest in exercising it on anybody except those who followed him of their own accord, and toward whom he had undertaken the duty of shocking them out of their normal state of slumber to prevent them from becoming a dead weight on his personal lifework; to awaken in them the evil and the virtuous feelings of which they were unaware in themselves, so that they might have possibly the only opportunity

coming their way to see themselves as they were, in stark filth, and to feel the essence wish "to become a man made in the image of God."

To expect Mr. Gurdjieff to have acted like an ordinary person is altogether ridiculous. He was not like anybody else. He was Gurdjieff. And this without benefit of black magic or doubtful powers as his critics would have it, but simply as the very natural result of the strict inner discipline under which he lived all his life.

And considering from my own observations, how my all too sparing efforts to practice the Law of Otherwise in my general life situations, to avoid mechanical patterns of action and reaction as best it is given to me to see them, to try to avoid imitating others—as we all do from the day of our birth to the day that the grave claims us—have brought me certain freedom, poise and balance. How could we measure the results of his work on himself by this remarkable man who from early childhood, thanks to the injunction of his dying grandmother, began doing everything "not as his contemporaries, but otherwise"!

Yes, it is quite possible that he may have had to struggle with the devil in himself—that devil which each one of us carries enthroned in his own mind but whom few succeed in overcoming as he evidently did overcome it, struggling with his own host of despotic power craving "I's" in order to give birth in himself to the indivisible "I" for which he worked so assiduously; to the consciousness, to the state of awareness in which he believed, and for which he undeniably lived and searched throughout his long life.

No, I do not believe that Mr. Gurdjieff, working for his indivisible "I", searching for it in Unity and Awareness, would jeopardize his birthright by trying to exercise the colossal power which he naturally obtained and possibly used in his ignorant youth in a material sense.

We are told in the Work that we must sacrifice something over a long period of time, constantly, if we really wish to attain this inner unity, this right to say "I" in ourselves. We who have nothing at all to sacrifice cannot imagine what it might mean to have to sacrifice something very valuable to us, something that gave us Luciferian power—the power to do and to have whatever material riches we desire. Hypnotizing power would be such a

sacrifice. This Mr. Gurdjieff had to offer, and no doubt did. It really was a challenge to his Will To Be!

* * *

After Mr. Gurdjieff had already left for Paris, following his last visit to New York, someone from our former Ouspensky group brought up a question which is still very common even among newcomers who never met the two men.

"How do you account for Mr. Ouspensky leaving Mr. Gurdjieff, if he was such a great teacher?"

My answer is simple. I, too, have raised this question in my own mind, but I have said to myself, "Are you sure that the Law of Otherwise is not involved in their apparent rift?"

At times, one or another person will insist: "But what if Mr. Ouspensky did speak the truth as ordinarily understood, that he left Mr. Gurdjieff because he had ceased to understand? Suppose the Law of Otherwise does not operate here, you can't deny the possibility. What then?"

"Well, what then?" is my answer.

Indeed, for myself, I feel that the Law of Otherwise is involved in this question. But if it were not, if Mr. Ouspensky just "ceased to understand" as he contends, well, since "man cannot do," Mr. Ouspensky, being a man, could not do anything to help himself further to understand. That is simple. Lack of understanding necessarily reflects in one's actions, particularly in an honest being. Mr. Ouspensky was honest. Therefore assuming that he did cease to understand he must have parted with Mr. Gurdjieff as he tells us—of his own accord.

People seem to feel that they have me cornered when I agree to this. But for me, everything is interconnected and limitation in judging teachers of such a stature represents a product of our own small minds and emotional poverty.

Yes, I feel that the Law of Otherwise was involved in the split between Mr. Ouspensky and his great teacher. It was not even necessary for Mr. Ouspensky to know it, or to be certain that he understood it, let alone to tell us that he did. Whatever it was by which he was tested may have been well beyond his power of endurance; and even if he had understood, he may have lacked the inner fortitude to lose himself in his understanding. Surely Mr. Gurdjieff must have played his hand consciously; surely he

operated the Law of Otherwise—for are we not told that we must leave others in our shoes if we will proceed further? Are we not told we may lose all we have gained when, after giving it away, the recipient fails adequately to utilize it?

And why would Mr. Ouspensky feel inclined to leave the fountain of wisdom and knowledge that was his Master? Why would he wish to exchange his company, the exhilaration of his proximity for a lecture hall full of crawling minds, idiots of the first water, depriving himself of an opportunity to obtain more enlightenment, to verify his findings with an appreciative teacher, to sit by him and enhance his own personal worth?

But what would it profit Mr. Gurdjieff if this, his most brilliant and sincere pupil, on whom his entire treasures had been lavished, were to sit tight by his side and refuse to move and to go share with others, to multiply the talent that he had received, make it yield in kind by enlightening in turn many who would never hear about the Work unless he made it known to them?

This was a perfect, pathetic setting for the great old man. My feeling is that if Mr. Ouspensky failed to understand, then Mr. Gurdjieff had to sacrifice—to sacrifice his most cherished pupil to the need of all others, particularly of those of us who were to come much later, into whose lives the Work would become a beacon, a shaft of light to lead us out of the darkness and bewilderment of our life prison. Through these they would in turn be freed, both of them. Mr. Ouspensky must have understood. But willing or unwilling, he had to sacrifice and be sacrificed—"otherwise."

I cannot reconcile the idea of men of the stature of Mr. Gurdjieff and his brilliant pupil Mr. Ouspensky acting just like everybody else, quarrelling mechanically, or mechanically going on hand in hand in harmony in the same way as every other master-pupil combination. All this would have been worthless from the point of view of the Work, if the Work alone were concerned. But very likely it was not alone concerned. These men had to think of their work on themselves; men such as these could not have even the shadow of a chance to work on themselves through the ordinary daily tasks that thwart our best efforts. For them, a task had to involve sacrifice—something that hurt constantly like a thorn; something that called for constant friction, since neither one of them could escape the comments

not only of an unfriendly outside world but also of the admiring, identified members of their own groups. Theirs was, I believe, intentional suffering on a maximum level. It provided the friction between "yes" and "no" constantly needed for self-development; it furthered the Work of all who were touched by it, and, therefore, the interests of the Work itself.

For myself, this represents the masterpiece of otherwisess since like all legitimate, conscious otherwisess it will always leave a doubt in the minds of those whose hearts have not spoken to bring about understanding, whose instinctive reason has not yet disclosed to them the actual truth behind a baffling situation.

Disputes may continue, and curiosity may go on forever about the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky affair. But not for me. I have come to my own clear conclusion because I had faith in both men. I feel that they believed what they taught; that they lived the Work themselves. And they had to follow the System pattern: not the easiest thing to do.

* * *

But how is it possible that a man like Mr. Gurdjieff was the victim of an automobile accident? How dare he commit such an outrage, such an act of shocking atrocity upon his followers? Some people speak about it as though implying that we should be ashamed because Mr. Gurdjieff was involved in so disreputable a thing. From them not even a word of commiseration—only the finger of scorn pointing at him for having faced so dire a predicament. It is averred that he brought the accident upon himself by driving his machine like a madman; that he was like an "irresponsible demon at the wheel," they say. I disdain to answer because his accident means something so entirely different to me.

Indeed, this episode of Mr. Gurdjieff's colorful life shows how "otherwise" he worked on himself. So it seems to me. A man who devoted his entire life to the search for the secret of how to become a "man without quotation marks," and who actually succeeded in learning it, as evidenced by his still magnificent presence on his eighty-third birthday, would such a man as this be doing stupid stunts late in life for the questionable pleasure of breaking speed records, or having other idiotic thrills?

I see things in another light. Let us assume, I say to myself,

that there really is some truth in the awesome theory of recurrence, of which one hardly dares speak since it becomes dangerous once one knows about it, as has already been hinted elsewhere. Suppose Mr. Gurdjieff had reason to believe in the possibility of recurrence, that he even remembered incidents of his life from a previous recurrence. Now, then, he would most naturally remember this terrific accident of his. What a great challenge to an evolving man of his development and caliber, in the aim of going through this very accident *knowingly* all over again without losing himself, without becoming identified with the terror traces lodged in his instinctive center from a previous experience when he had not yet become what he was now! To go through with it all, but this time, or at some time, consciously, well aware of the fact that it would happen, and accepting the challenge of the moment for the purpose of freeing himself from the Law of Accident at some future if not the next recurrence?

Isn't it sensible to presume that once an accident has occurred in a man's life, it will continue to occur according to this idea until that man can go through it all, entirely conscious of every little thing, without losing himself, before he can hope to escape into another possibility in his line of time in another recurrence, possibly the last one, to be lived under the Laws of Will and Cause and Effect, eliminating the Law of Accident altogether? Wouldn't Mr. Gurdjieff's accident be a price that he had to pay for this freedom?

So long as there is a possibility of this being so, why not see in Mr. Gurdjieff's accident, a colossal intentional suffering, his intentional wish to suffer this occurrence as it had always happened before yet trying to remain as conscious as he could? Would not an unbelievable amount of energy be required for this effort as well as a tremendous will to remain awake both before and during the ordeal? Would it not be a liberating ordeal, in a sense? I find it rewarding and profitable to ponder about it, and when I read of other great leaders—Meher Baba, for instance—having undergone like experiences' entailing much suffering for their persons, I feel that somewhere truth must lurk hidden in these thoughts of mine except that I cannot completely discern, let alone explain, the pattern that would make it all quite clear.

For well I remember that we were told that ordinary idiots such as myself, for instance, live under the Law of Accident. Man

that is awakening may live under the Law of Fate, but only the higher men live under the Laws of Will and of Cause and Effect. I have given much thought to this. My long thinking has made it plain to me that it is only through conscious suffering that a milestone in anybody's experience, such as this accident in Mr. Gurdjieff's life, may be finally transcended.

I understood Mr. Gurdjieff to tell us once, at the Wellington, that all people who pray and believe in a finer, higher life release a great deal of energy when they pray. It was then that he mentioned that it would be most useful for us to think often about this kind of energy; to imagine it arising from the earth to the upper regions, as high up as our thoughts could reach, trying to direct them to some point well known to each one of us, way up in heavens—a group of stars, a constellation, anything. To imagine all this energy, originating from all believing humanity past, present, and future, reaching this place above and becoming concentrated there. To this unknown place in outer space we should then direct our thoughts and, wishing with all our hearts, we should feel that we were charging ourselves with this energy thus released and accumulated by lofty aspirations from all directions of the Earth; that we were storing it for the purpose of working on ourselves so that it would help us to grow into "men made in the image of God. And having done that," he added, "promise yourselves that you will pay back for the energy you have stolen, through conscious efforts and intentional suffering, when the time comes for you to pay."

I remember that I thrilled to the beautiful thought. At times I have wondered whether all our efforts to awaken, to grow beyond our puny selves do not also release some special kind of energy which a man like Mr. Gurdjieff, "trader in solar energy," who taught us how to work with it, could also borrow for himself and then return to us and to others through the work that we did together. In any event this matter of his accident is one upon which I look with a great deal of loving thought, without forgetting that in Mr. Gurdjieff's life, in everything that he said or did we must always go beyond appearances to reach the kernel of his purpose or the truth he envisaged which he could teach only to the extent of our individual understanding.

It is most interesting, this idea of understanding— how the same thing can be understood differently by different individuals,

each one seeing things in his own way. It is an ever-engrossing and productive activity to try to learn from one another just what each has understood. In group work the result is at times appalling. And the deeper, the more true the concept, the more levels of understanding it can touch. The greatness of a concept can readily be assessed by the number of reactions to which it can give birth.

Just imagine how rich life becomes when you feel deeply within yourself that any intentional suffering on your part can release energy which men of higher development may use for their own purposes—perhaps a saint to perform miracles, to help those who are in need of help, and so on!

Mr. Gurdjieff's English was altogether schematic, something like an entirely different language which somehow one understood. Actually he spoke very few words. I have never ceased to wonder how it was that one could hear him say so much. His presence, his voice, his gestures, all seemed to convey a world of meaning; a meaning that spread within one's being to give, at times, a sensation of holiness, as was the case this particular time of which I am speaking.

On this particular evening, after he had given us this exercise and said that this was real prayer that could be heard, he took his harmonium and played the soft melodious air that he frequently played at the end of an evening to show that it was over and that the time had come for us to leave. Now the melody was especially subtle, it almost choked in tears. When he had finished it he murmured as usual, as though speaking for his own ears only, "A m i n."

All left. And I trod lightly, as though I had been suddenly endowed with wings.

It was earlier during that same evening that he explained that he did not have just any religion or all religions in mind when he had told us that a searching man could work his way to the Path as a monk.

"I do not speak of pseudoreligions," he said. "There are four real religions—the Christian Church, Roman and Orthodox, the Moslem faith, the Hebraic faith, and the Brahmanic religion."

I understood that these are religions because they have a hierarchy representing inner circles of humanity where real esoteric traditions are kept alive, discipline follows a very definite pattern,

knowledge, ceremonial acts, everything has meaning, and psychological practices or rituals are envisaged to bring about the change in being that makes man's evolution possible. They are not merely societies or associations where members merely come together to listen to their own voices and bask in the imaginary sun of their personal worth.

I understood him to say that it was both interesting and important to think about this, and to try to understand one's religion, and what religion meant in order to see why it was that he said that religion was conscience, and that no man could change his religion for it was his religion that provided his background for inner expansion.

The religion of which Mr. Gurdjieff spoke is a religion that can teach a householder a special, practical system for finding his bearings in life; for struggling with life so that he may find his way to the Path, forging a soul for himself in the process.

He said that religion and its Way, the Way of the Monk, is only for the man who is willing from the start to sacrifice everything and retire into a monastery or a convent to live. This is what all men cannot do. And the fact that religion is reproached for many misunderstandings and absurdities does not really militate against it, since religion that functions in the outside circle, in the circle of confusion, in the tower of Babel, must meet the level in which it manifests, and so its actions proceed accordingly from that level.

"Yes," said Mr. Gurdjieff musingly, "I have many sons away in monasteries."

Mr. Gurdjieff addressed these words to me personally but within hearing of several persons, stating that he had over fifty sons in monasteries.

I understood him to mean, of course, spiritual children for, one after another, many people who came in close contact with his ideas and were subject to the disciplines of his System found their way to religious communities not because it is the only way to which it leads, but because their temperament inclined them in that direction and his training made it clear to them that this was their way to the Path; for the time being in any event.

To be able to take religion objectively and to hear everything that it says, everything that it teaches, impartially, is a great gift. To receive such a gift, and to be able to use it enriches the

life of the recipient to such an extent that everything upon which his heart touches takes on pristine clarity and becomes whole.

In the first place, this gift turns one from a critical fault-finding individual into a tolerant and understanding man or woman. Then it becomes possible for one to accept the representatives of religion as men; and man being what he is, to stop expecting the impossible from them and from venting mechanical disparagement upon their number 1, number 2, number 3 condition while admiring the higher men who shine in their ranks.

In my case, the passing of time and the application of the newly acquired tricentered discipline to myself made me realize the extraordinary wisdom of my own church, the Roman Catholic Church, and neutralized the results of all apparent inanities on the part of some of her children priests which had formerly exasperated me merely because they went against the grain and I never gave them thought enough to understand them and let them fit where they belonged.

When this happened, I was aghast as I saw symbol after symbol of my religion become alive and eloquent. I found in the Church untold opportunities to work on myself and put into practice the discipline that had become so much a part of me. I have had innumerable occasions for tricentered activity by listening to an apparently stupid sermon mentally, while emotionally accepting that it must be as it is at the level for which it is intended, as my body kneels and tries to move as consciously as I have learned to try to do at the Movements, accepting hard wooden benches, overcrowded aisles, annoying whisperings of the faithful at prayer, as so many welcome opportunities for intentional suffering. Ushers who pompously lord it all over everybody, and who formerly conditioned me for expressing negative emotion and openly opposing them, now evoke my gratitude since they provide me with the opportunity to practice humility and obedience when I can manage to do it or to boldly but intentionally refuse to pay any attention to them.

Oh, yes, one returns to the fold altogether changed and entertaining the thought that there will always be churches at hand where one may find plenty of opportunities to work on oneself!

In this I find one of the subtlest products of the Work; this moment when the change in attitude which it has fostered in us affects ordinary life events, and everything on which our attention

rests expands and grows until impartial thought is present at all levels, valid and lucid, enhancing everything, from the lowest to the highest, from the most common to the most esoteric.

And thus the Work grows constantly in all directions. It grows subtly, pervadingly. I have come to find myself in surprised admiration of its action, on realizing that all that I had learned previously, irrespective of its nature, has become closely related in the splendid whole of a unique pattern.

And this is how our Work designs the map that brings the prodigal back home when he has gained understanding and an all embracing affection for the pattern in which nothing is left out.

There are times when I feel that Mr. Gurdjieff's greatest gift to me is the respect for religion that he gave back to me. Possibly I never lost it; but I thought I had, and I acted accordingly. My own religion in particular fostered feelings of rebellion within me, my focal distance, was incorrect; I had no screen to see beyond its intransigence, its limitations, to see beyond its rules. It took Mr. Gurdjieff to show me, and with me all the other black sheep in his flock, so far as their different religions were concerned, that "MAN CANNOT CHANGE HIS RELIGION—BECAUSE RELIGION IS CONSCIENCE."

Those were his words.

It is surprising that in endeavoring to understand his teaching, to struggle with oneself along the lines set forth by his Work, each one came to understand tricenteredly; that is, not only with the mind but also with the heart and the whole of his presence, all that had been misunderstood in his own religion, everything he had opposed in religion in general; how things must be the way they have come to be; that everything works together for man's general welfare; and that it is one's privilege to try to use one's own religion to work upon oneself, one's duty to give each man the right to do as much.

For as is true of several men making the same statement in different languages, their words will have the same meaning even if they sound differently.

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Regarding Mr. Gurdjieff's antics and the "shock" which people usually felt when they came into his presence, in my

personal case this was most beneficial to me for I was already conditioned through my work with Mr. Ouspensky to take things impartially. I was not identified with anything that went on. Anyone could have stood on his head had he wished it, and I wouldn't have batted an eyelash. If that was what they wished to do, or felt that they had to do, well and good. Yet at no time did I accept anything on the spot. We had been forewarned exactly against accepting without thinking, and had been told repeatedly that we were, first of all, to doubt what we heard or were taught or witnessed in the Work.

"Who does not doubt, has no place here with me," said Mr. Gurdjieff.

"Doubt everything," said Mr. Ouspensky, "particularly anything that I myself tell you."

Therefore, we were not asked to accept anything. We were merely admonished against passing mechanical judgment; told to observe AND TO WITHHOLD OPINIONS until we had sufficient facts. This I tried to do.

It did not require a great deal of effort on my part to withhold judgment when anything out of the ordinary or anything untoward, which might have shocked me, took place. It went with the whole setup. Here was something so extraordinary, something that touched everyone so deeply, so wholly, so entirely different and "otherwise" from the usual weak approach of other philosophies that anything at all could be expected, and whatever came would of necessity call for violence to be personally exerted upon one's favorite mores.

Had any of us in my group entertained any doubts about the possibility of men of higher being levels existing—man number 5, number 6, number 7—about whom Mr. Ouspensky had spoken to us, such doubts would have had to disappear the moment we met Mr. Gurdjieff. Here was a man different from other men heretofore seen or imagined. What number man he was, I cannot tell. But I do know that he was a man such as there must be but a handful, or who exist in spheres of action inaccessible to our ordinary view. No one who met him could say otherwise. But, as the case may be, he showed facets of the Balanced Man, which evoked in me unswerving loyalty and profound respect.

He seemed to understand all, to accept all, to blend everybody's infirmities, weaknesses, disabilities, points of view, negative

emotions and stupidities into the great unity of purpose embodied in his efforts to help us to become One in the Work, to become whole individually and collectively, to awaken. It was this ability to bestow and to foster harmony in disharmony that made Mr. Gurdjieff's presence so valuable to me.

It is true that he made things extremely difficult for all who surrounded him, as though expressly bent on discouraging everybody, on placing a terrific burden upon the understanding of whoever showed interest in his ideas. That was part of his greatness: his ability to complicate things in a way that challenged ingenuity, but all the same so simply that one would feel oneself a greater idiot than one suspected oneself to be by failing to come through.

And there he stood among us—a giant of a man, radiating strength, wisdom, good spirits, and perspicacity from every pore in his being. Stamping his feet, screaming and calling us idiots, smiling cherubically, distributing lichee nuts and candy among all, magnificently calling "STOPS" when we were in the most precarious positions, supping, dining everybody generously night after night at his apartment, criticising, approving, teaching, playing the accordion, joking, all in a patriarchal setting that endeared him the more to me.

When he said "*Merdel*!" people would swallow and look around in evident embarrassment. When I heard him say it the first time in English, I thought I had heard incorrectly. Mr. Ouspensky was propriety itself; he was sober in speech and in demeanor. But as I caught myself looking around askance, as though doubting my own ears, and simultaneously saw that I was really amused by the general embarrassment I laughed at myself, grinned in appreciation, and understood the "method" which freed me right then and there from "word" slavery.

There were rumors about stories and things that Mr. Gurdjieff had told some people in our groups, and to other persons whom he would single out and call to his side. I have no doubt that he could say the most disreputable things he pleased; but I personally never heard them from his own lips. The words came to my ears through third persons who reported them, at times with misgivings, at times with amusement, some with hurt feelings, and so on. But the truth is that I, myself, at no time heard him say anything improper.

Once or twice I saw him call someone to his side and had an inkling of what he may have said, judging from the face of the person involved. But I was never involved. The nearest I came to it was on a certain occasion when I had come with a close Russian friend. He called my friend to his side as we were about to leave that evening, and motioned for me to sit down by him on the floor. My friend stood, ear close to Mr. Gurdjieff's mouth. Mr. Gurdjieff spoke to him in Russian. I was listening, but although I know the Russian language I was not conversant with the words that he spoke. Mr. Gurdjieff beamed upon me and he said, pointing to my friend's scarlet face, "He knows, but does not understand. You do not know, but understand. Teach him."

I don't believe anyone, no matter how close to him, could describe Mr. Gurdjieff. He was beyond description. I found him so extraordinary indeed that even the flow of time was different for me with him around. His short stay of a few months in New York during his last visit here was enough for him to weld his spiritual "empire," so to speak; to leave the imprint of his being on the budding spirits of those who loved him at sight and joined his flock of their own choice and free will; to bring the inner fire in me to so high a pitch that it fused and integrated everything that I had previously heard and learned, all contradictions, all misunderstandings, and to forge the key for which I had searched so long.

I am glad to be a child of Mr. Gurdjieff's old age. He was well into his eighties when he visited New York in 1948. It seems to me that he had attained, by then, a very high level of being. Most assuredly he did not show himself to be the terrible man so colorfully depicted by many. I approached him without prejudice, for I had never known that he was still living; and not having heard Mr. Ouspensky discuss him I was blissfully unaware of the fact that he was a "bogey man" to shy from until dissension arose in our group as to whether or not we should follow him.

For me, the mere fact of knowing that he had fathered the "System," that he had been Madam's and Mr. Ouspensky's teacher, prevented me from reviling him, particularly sight unseen. I met him with eager, open heart. I loved him from the first moment that his eyes met mine. At no time did I fear him. If I respected and feared Mr. Ouspensky, I respected and loved Mr. Gurdjieff.

There are some who say that when Mr. Gurdjieff came to America on his last visit he had already experienced a change in being and was not as "material" as he had been known to be; that after his accident, he became a different, an improved Mr. Gurdjieff.

I did not know him before this happened, and need not speculate about this phase of his life. I must admit that I have seen many persons grow in years without necessarily becoming wiser, or more loving or more lovable, but quite the reverse. But I should expect a person who courted wisdom all his life, who harbored the best of wishes for his fellow man, to become a much better individual on aging and mellowing. And it seems rather difficult to see how a "devil" as black as Mr. Gurdjieff is said to have been until the time of his accident, by those who side against him, could ever come out of it and into old age any "mellower" or "finer" than he had been to begin with.

As is true of everything touching him, the matter must remain a controversial subject.

On the other hand, the System is so extraordinary, the Law of Otherwise so miraculous in helping one to grow in strength and maturity, that I would not put it past Mr. Gurdjieff to have acted many times like a devil; possibly for the purpose of working on a very loving nature and appearing to be the reverse of what he was. Or he could have been a devil, for all that matters. If he were, then he attained, at the end, the change in being that he always sought. For this man lived his System, there is no denying him that. He served its interests, and wherever he may have brought it from, it seems to me that, tongue in cheek, he must have been rendering it real service whenever he intentionally sinned against social niceties and *bon-ton* rules.

I have brought to the surface my attitude toward the Work in talking of Mr. Gurdjieff's, at times, apparently fantastic behavior because it is well to show that if an "idiot" at my level can harbor such deep feelings toward the Man who gave it his entire life, who sacrificed everything to it, who brought it to us and fathered us all spiritually, that Man's love of it, his respect for it, his faith in it must surpass our understanding.

And how could he debase that which he served, belie that which he taught, for no other reason than to please himself, or because

he wished to impress the idiots who surrounded him? No. Mr. Gurdjieff was himself a shock for everybody because he intended that it should be so. He had to create the struggle, the friction between "yes and no" which he knew would give us energy through a change in understanding, would teach us to ponder, to gain quick discernment, to find our way out of the mass of contradictions which he presented at first sight but which became logic, itself, when the effort was made to try to rise and to see from what might be a higher dimension for us.

His memory evokes in me a real feeling of gratitude. He always gave me the impression of something phenomenal—like a mountain range that suddenly became alive and trod all over heavily, conscious of every move of its own, of everything that surrounded it, of things untold which were invisible to the rest of us. And with this all, a special warmth came from him, light shone in his eyes that branded him as something quite apart.

Every move of Mr. Gurdjieff's was a shock—unexpected, adroit; it acted swiftly on those within as well as on those out of his reach. Imagine a mountain range moving gracefully about! Gracefully, with feline unconcern, then suddenly causing a landslide to fall upon someone to shock not only the victim but also those roundabout! To be in his presence was to feel alive, every nerve tingling in the awareness of "danger," for no one could safely tell when the peaceful green slopes of this mountain range would turn into a roaring volcano and wash away, in the flow of its lava, all sham and negative attitudes and grand airs and hypocrisy.

This attentive "watch" endowed one—at least it endowed me—with energy to absorb, digest, assimilate, try to do, make supreme efforts to be, working forever without being tired, without indulging in any negative emotion that he might sense, catch in the air, and expose to open ridicule before the entire audience.

For had Mr. Gurdjieff as much as sensed that someone "could not take this, could not stomach that" it would have been like an open invitation to play upon the culprit's emotions for his own sake, forcing upon him a lesson he would not be likely to forget. Mr. Gurdjieff traded in solar energy, as it has been said. This was priceless merchandise and could be had only through real efforts to work on oneself, to understand, to withstand, and to

endure. Those who managed to exert such efforts came out the winners. Those who did not, lost all they could have received and all they had come with, to boot.

Mr. Gurdjieff could play on any person's false personality, his nerves, his emotions, in order to help him see what a fool and an imbecile he was. When one appreciated his effort, he was kind, magnanimous, explicit: he showed what was needed, where it was needed, why it was needed. If one failed to see, especially due to glasses tinted with vanity, self-love, and prejudice, he exposed one's miserable condition so that all might see and learn. He did not care how far he cornered the idiots that presumed to fence with him in the psychological field, for he was past master in all fields and this one in particular. For this reason it is practically impossible to classify or to describe Mr. Gurdjieff in any way. His greatness lay in making one realize that what one saw in him was that which lurked within oneself. Nothing else. That is why he was different things to different people. It was not only due to his perfect acting, but also because he knew how to evoke a real response from individuals, how to strike them bare of good manners and *bon ton*. And each one responded by exposing his own colors.

Those of us who seek the guidance of men like Mr. Gurdjieff are presumably trying to find ourselves, to know ourselves. We should feel the greatest gratitude to this man, who afforded us the perfect opportunity to further our desire.

Mr. Gurdjieff certainly knew when to catch one unawares, how to puncture the inflated balloon of one's false personality. It was when one least expected it that he would put on an act, especially staged for the benefit of all and everyone. I say "benefit" advisedly, since I always felt that it was his intention to help us mirror one another's faults. He admonished us against inner considering, and was himself above and beyond it; he did not care a hoot how badly he might be judged, how poorly he might impress others, so that he could do things that upset our apple carts and left us shivering at the realization of our own smallness.

Little wonder that many times we reacted violently against him when we should have been kissing his benevolent hand!

Because this man's attitude was indeed correct. He lived among his pupils in the manner in which he taught them they must live. And to destroy complacency and inner considering, he managed to make himself as objectionable as he wished to be objectionable at any given moment under circumstances of any kind. In this way he worked both on himself and for us, without stint, continuously.

How could anyone be so shortsighted as to expect Mr. Gurdjieff, who believed in the System that he taught, to hand it over to us at our leisure as any ordinary course is taught? Did he not tell us that he must destroy complacency? Is there a better way to do this than to rub people the wrong way? And when these people are your own followers, are you not sacrificing yourself in so doing, and are you not putting yourself in a bad light to help them in their efforts?

This is how he functioned, as it seems to me. The results were staggering for those who remained loyal to him, those who trusted him but kept their eyes open, ready to jump to avoid his blows; who, without incurring the serious error of becoming sugary over him, took from him as much as they could hold, without niggardness, trusted him intelligently, and were infused with energy to last a lifetime.

Mr. Gurdjieff gave me the feeling that he was teaching us to become experts in meeting the unexpected, the worst, whatever life had in store for us in obstacles and nightmares; and that, therefore, he had to act, at times, the part of the nightmare. In all his ways, and by all means he had to find the way to keep those who surrounded him as awake as it was possible for each one to be awake even for a second. Moreover, he had to show himself as he was not; things apparently had to keep moving as they were not in actual reality, for it is not possible to destroy complacency with only comfortable cushions to offer: we would just sit put and fall still more deeply asleep.

Had Mr. Gurdjieff acted differently, how could he himself avoid the danger of falling asleep like the rest of us? How else could he work constantly on himself, how else could he bring intentional suffering upon himself?

Derision, misunderstanding, slander; the finger of scorn always pointing at him! These must be heaped upon him; no doubt he

meant it to be so; it was his payment for his wish to be. For where else could he find alarm clocks to keep him open-eyed, this man who stood all alone among a sleeping throng and his slumbering idiots; this man who devoted his entire life to the Work, struggling against himself to shock others unsparingly in the conscious hope to help us realize that we can, that we must try to become real "man made in the image of God."

PART III

The Work Goes On

CHAPTER 8

Mr. Ouspensky gave the Enneagrama diagram to our group only once—when he drew our attention to its great significance and said that the more a person knew and understood, the better he would be able to use this diagram to prove his understanding and his knowledge. I understood him to say that the person for "whom the Enneagrama moves" already begins to understand something.

When he was asked what was the right way to start trying to think about this, he mentioned the fact that the Enneagrama was directly related to every other diagram we knew and that it was important for us to try to think in this direction.

So far as I was concerned I was far too busy at the time in unraveling my thoughts on some of the other earlier diagrams that he had given us, too much immersed in them to give much thought to the Enneagrama. Actually I did not understand it at all. And since Mr. Ouspensky did not bring up the subject more than three or four times in the general group with which I studied in New York, nor did he refer to it again in our own group I was not able even to think about what would happen when the Enneagrama "moved" for me—if it ever did.

Mr. Ouspensky's departure for England had come about this time. And feeling that my opportunity for further hope of development along System lines had practically disappeared for me with his absence, I promised myself that I would try not to forget what I thought I had learned and began concentrating more and more on the ideas which I felt I remembered. I used my own mental dictionary of System vocabulary; and when I came upon the word "Enneagrama" I realized how very little I knew about it, and reluctantly admitted that it had to remain just another diagram for me.

It was when Mr. Gurdjieff came to New York shortly after the death of his famous pupil that the Enneagrama leaped into prominence for me all of a sudden. I believe it was the day following his arrival that I, together with all the members of the

group who had just been doing the movements with him, came for the first time to his apartment at the Wellington Hotel.

Many persons were gathered already in the living room, and many more people were still coming in when I entered. The first thing that caught my eye was the large Enneagrama made out of large leaves over the mantelpiece. This gave me a feeling of reassurance: I felt at home. And suddenly I remembered that the Enneagrama had never moved for me.

As the hectic period covered by Mr. Gurdjieff's sojourn in New York went by—in a manner entirely different from what I should have expected Mr. Ouspensky's lectures to continue—days full of unbelievable activity began for me, and any thoughts of the Enneagrama or other ideas were instinctively set aside while I plunged to the full of my capacity and ability into the completely new, silent, potent training that I was now receiving just by living and "trying to do" while cherishing the "wish to be."

I had not seen the serial multiplication exercise with the mystic number 1 4 2 8 5 7 when I worked with Mr. Ouspensky because I never did the movements or saw them done while he was here, and no reason ever arose for me to become interested in it. But now Mr. Gurdjieff bracingly took us through the paces, and all of us did the movements with him whether or not we knew them. I speak of myself and those who were in my group; there were others, particularly among those who lived at Mendham, who were far more advanced than we and knew much more about the movements and the Work. They had been doing the movements for some time, and had learned a great deal about them.

In any event, now that he was with all of us, Mr. Gurdjieff gave great importance to the Enneagrama and to the Multiplication Exercise related to it. One day, while he was teaching it to us, he bore down like thunder upon our standing rows and electrified everybody by falling now upon one, now upon another would-be dancer student like a veritable ton of bricks. It was not so much that he was doing anything or saying anything to anyone; it was the mere proximity of his person that rooted one to the spot. This was particularly true of myself, who had had no previous contact with him.

I was standing fourth in line 5, alongside my friend Annette Harris who stood trembling by me in line 8. Mr. Gurdjieff had

called a "STOP." I presume she moved, because he came swiftly to her shouting "Idiot!" as he took hold of her arm to return it to the posture that she should have kept.

Shivering with fright, she began to mumble. He let go at once and relaxed every muscle in his face. Gone were the apparent signs of anger. I caught the look of compassion that came into his eyes. His eyes met mine, and presumably because I was handy he yanked me out of place and shoved me to line 2, saying, "Your place there."

Whereupon he went back to his chair, facing the group, and the Multiplication Exercise began at once with my new line moving into first position.

When this happened I had not memorized as yet the 1 4 2 8 5 7 sequence. The exercise was new to me, much was taking place, and I was too slow in realizing that the six canon changes that followed depended upon a very definite rule. Now I saw that a change of place followed each multiplication by a different number (2, 3, 4, 5, 6), and that the mystic number itself changed although its digits remained the same: 1 4 2 8 5 7

multiplication by 2: 2 8 5 7 1 4

multiplication by 3: 4 2 8 5 7 1

multiplication by 4: 5 7 1 4 2 8

multiplication by 5: 7 1 4 2 8 5

multiplication by 6: 8 5 7 1 4 2

We worked strenuously that night. But the realization that had dawned on me made such an impression that I felt as light as a feather and exuberant with energy. I became imbued with these movements; they soaked through me, and influenced all my subsequent work on myself.

This incident became responsible for the Enneagram "moving" for me. Also, it meant a great deal to me in connection with many other System ideas. And just as Mr. Ouspensky had once told me it would come to pass, this "moving" of the Enneagrama interrelated for me many concepts and many statements particularly with regard to recurrence and the "300 years" which Mr. Ouspensky jokingly would tell us we still might have left over in which to "see" into the meaning of ordinary things.

But this came much later, because during Mr. Gurdjieff's stay in New York I had no time to think about any Work ideas.

I was busy living them. He was a man who taught incessantly merely by being there and creating situations in which one had to see and work on oneself one way or another.

Around this time my work on myself assumed entirely different aspects from that which it had been until now. I was submerged in a completely new order of activities which, so far as my personal efforts were concerned, centered mostly upon learning the complicated "movements," studying the Law of Otherwise in daily action, and particularly in trying to be near Mr. Gurdjieff by hook or by crook every moment that I could or could not spare from my ordinary business day.

However, when he left—and what a void it was, but how "otherwise" since it was full to the brim with purpose and meaning, in utter contrast to the despair and helplessness in which I and those in my group were left at Mr. Ouspensky's departure!—we began to work in earnest with the movements, practicing with terrific zeal. The Multiplication Exercise held foremost place throughout all our practicing. We expected Mr. Gurdjieff to return in the Fall; we wished to be in very good form when he returned.

He had scarcely gone, when the readings from *In Search of the Miraculous* began. And it was not too long thereafter that the order came from him for me to translate this book into Spanish.

It was while engaged in so doing that the Enneagrama once more leapt into prominence for me. I noticed for the first time that the numbers 1 4 2 8 5 7 accompanied the diagram. This fact interested me, and I began vaguely to wonder about it but was too busy with my translating work that summer to give time to long thinking of my own other than required by my wish to render a pure and accurate translation of this book, which called for well-based understanding of its context.

Then came the sorrow-laden days of Mr. Gurdjieff's death, and the titanic efforts made by Jeanne De Salzmann to preserve the integrity of the spiritual empire that he had built. This was still a very active period, but slowly we all settled down to the task of using the treasure that he had left us, "serving as alarm clocks for one another so that when one falls asleep other alarm clocks will go off and keep the rest awake."

It was as he had envisioned it. To have had so much, and have been apparently left with so little would have been unbearable without System ideas to fall upon. I began giving long thoughts

to the Enneagrama, wondering how it was possible for it to move, why it had never moved for me, whatever it might mean.

When I say that I was left with little, I mean in comparison with what I had enjoyed in the past; for now I was indeed among the fortunate, having remained in a group led by Mr. Nyland who gave his entire time and put all his presence into working with those of us who had become his responsibility. However, I had been used to working at an incredible pitch of intensity; at first mentally, with Mr. Ouspensky and his horn of plenty overflowing with powerful new ideas, and subsequently with his Master, our incredible Mr. Gurdjieff, with his vast wealth of emotional shocks and unexpected situations, of intricate movements, of challenging tasks and unbelievable feats of physical endurance.

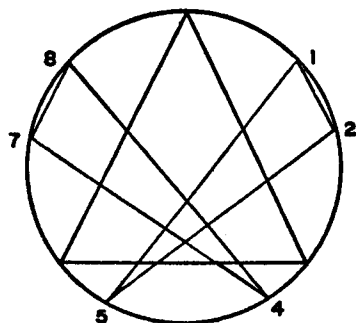
Now the time had come to work on ourselves. We had to apply the technique about which we had spoken so lavishly, about which I had speculated so richly, and the practical work was so simple that it was tedious, monotonous, unending. This is not a technique to be mastered overnight. Many a day of emptiness and feelings of futility must be endured before one begins to catch a glimpse of hope.

I complained to Mr. Nyland, as did others; we asked to be placed in some other group, assuming that there were people who worked with more "ideas" than others. He was kindness itself, but equally austere; no new ideas—we had been given enough; in fact we had heard almost everything that Mr. Gurdjieff had said, and now we had to get down to the business of working.

Mr. Nyland carefully avoided intellectual pastiming through discussions concerning System ideas. We had heard them, we retained what rightfully belonged to us, but we were developing lopsidedly because we had not done any real work on ourselves. Now was the time to work.

There followed long dreary months of work that apparently led nowhere; experiments in self-observation; sharing of experiences with one another; efforts to try to be present to ourselves, as we now spoke of self-remembering; movements, tasks, reports on them; sensing exercises, which were new to me for I had never had them with Mr. Ouspensky; working with the others and trying to think of working for the Work; bringing new people, raising funds through group projects, transcribing notes, and so on.

It was during this period, so different for me, that I began giving the longest possible thought to the Enneagrama. I began wondering what would happen if I were to multiply and record the changes that ensued in the diagram itself. And then it happened! The Enneagrama became alive for me. The first diagram was the same as the one known to me, but it changed in multiplication by two and by four! I offer without comments the result of my scribbling.



For me this was a beginning. And it gave me then, and has given me since, a wealth of related thoughts and emotional flashes of understanding as well as a great emotional shock because it had taken so long for the "moving" to jell.

I must repeat that these diagrammatic changes in the Enneagrama through application of movement according to the Multiplication Exercise are a product of my own personal scribbles. I offer no interpretations, and merely mention them to point out one of the ways in which I proceeded to work in search of enlightenment. Those to whom the concept of Unity, or Recurrence, or any other Work idea that may be related to these diagrammatic changes is particularly appealing are free to interpret them as they wish in this specific instance. But all must remember that this is not anything backed by Mr. Ouspensky's authority, since he was long dead by the time that it came into my mind and I could not obtain his confirmation; nor is it authorized in any manner by any leader in the Work, for I have not consulted anyone because I may well be lying,

and there is no reason why they should assume responsibility for my foolhardiness.

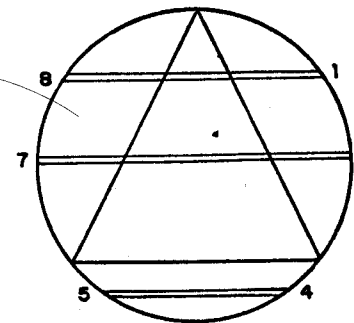
It was amazing to see the many beautiful patterns obtained from the movements in this diagram! One thing became especially clear to me through this entirely personal and, I repeat, unauthorized effort on my part. Namely, I understood for myself Mr. Ouspensky's statement when, referring to our complaints that we did not understand something or other, he would say to us, "You will understand, later. You have at least 300 years."

And then, again, the reason why he always insisted on telling us that to understand the idea of recurrence was very dangerous because when one knew about it one had to do something; he who knew nothing about it did not lose anything. But he who did, had very few lives left in which to escape from the "prison" in which we live. I had always found this to be terribly unjust. Now it became quite clear that it had to be so. That is, if we take 1 4 2 8 5 7 to be the key number for "all and everything" standing still in its Mayan condition in Life, which naturally includes man.

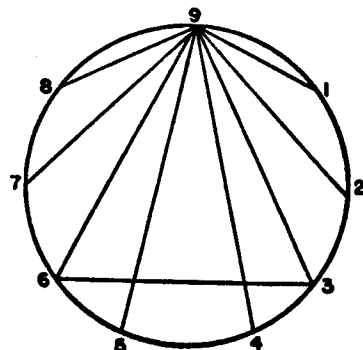
The person who begins to understand, to have a feeling about recurrence may be said, perhaps, to be about to make the first move. Multiplication by 2. Line 2 moves into first position.

There will follow four, possible five more moves toward awakening. Beyond that, circumstances cannot change; for the next multiplication—multiplication by 8—begins a different octave and one's "chances become fewer," as Mr. Ouspensky used to say to us. This I found in the following manner:

In multiplication by 6 we obtain what I might call Unity, the condition of the Balanced Man:



And Multiplication by 7 brings completion of the Octave and liberation through harmony:



But Multiplication by 8 starts an entirely different series, namely: 1 1 4 2 8 5 6. Complication is introduced, harmony is shattered through the splitting of 7 into 6 and 1; there is separation instead of integration. This leads into further complications introduced into the possibilities that are open to man for development; and the chance, again to hear the bell when it strikes the opportune moment to move forward at 1 4 2 8 5 7, may not come back to us before the Earth itself has finished its evolution and we have been able to escape.

Midnight has struck and the regal carriage has again turned into a pumpkin. Cinderella is back at her kitchen, and the Fairy Godmother is very far away.

As I stated before, all these speculations belong to me, and no one at all is to be held responsible if perchance I have lied by venturing to speak as though I knew about the sacred dance of Life and things I know nothing about.

* * *

When I first began to do Group Work with Mr. Nyland I was surprised to be told not to try to change myself. I really expected that there would be ways of doing it when one really desired it, although I had to admit that all my previous sincere efforts in this direction had been to no avail.

I was readily willing to try the new method. The System idea is to observe oneself, to observe impartially, beginning simply

without any intention of approving or disapproving of our actions. One observes for the single purpose of taking note of what goes on, of finding out many things we do not know about ourselves, about our actions and reactions, about our general attitudes and patterns.

For me, it was difficult to get rid of emotions which I considered negative by just observing. It took me a long time to realize that there is no other way to work on one's negativity. Others in my former group with Mr. Ouspensky welcomed the method. Previously we had been told by him to "try to avoid the expression of negative emotion"; but now the feeling was that we had to go on emoting negatively, to go on being unpleasant, unreasonable, just as we always did, without any regrets and without trying to bring pressure to bear upon ourselves in order to encourage any change.

Finally we all succeeded in understanding the situation and realized that it is not possible to remain forever stationary, that once we have understood our pattern of negative reactions we will exert an effort to try to be present, to try to remember ourselves when we feel a situation arising that may run away with us emotionally. A time comes when this familiarity with our particular type of negativity, of the tensions and the circumstances that produce it, makes it possible for us to "see it coming" before it gets the upper hand and we are present almost simultaneously with the opportunity to get lost.

It is here that the struggle against the expression of our personal brands of negative emotions starts. By this time we have observed in our persons that the loss of this energy depletes us of our strength. Eventually we come to understand the nature of this energy needed for our work, without which nothing can be attained; the energy of which we have so precious little, and which we are constantly wasting by indulging in emotional storms, discussing, arguing, chasing rainbows. It was from this point that Mr. Ouspensky started us. I understood him to say that this energy will help us to assimilate incoming impressions, and that without energy to exert efforts at this point where impressions enter our Work cannot amount to much.

But, personally, I had not gone very far with my strivings no matter how steadily and sincerely I tried. I really didn't know how to go about it; and I suffered, for I understood clearly the

undesirability of my negative manifestations, of my weakness. However, nothing ever happened to help me change. I tried hard to refrain from expressing negative emotions until the next opportunity to emote came up, and I again lost my bearings. I saw that I could "do" nothing about it because what I suppressed today struck all the more violently tomorrow; still worse, sometimes it would find expression in some other kind of undesirable manifestation.

Then real work came with its method of impartial observation, with its tasks and exercises in self-remembering and relaxing, of movements and sensing, physical work to share experiences with others in the group, thereby enriching my own field of observation. The System, calling a spade a spade without fear, work for the sake of working, without looking for rewards; and through all this, the opening of an entirely new way for me to work on myself overcoming through understanding and through watchful acceptance; the gaining of a sure footing in life—taming this great enemy through work on myself with the help of those who have gone and in common with those who are going my way so that Life became, in time, my Master and my friend.

This is the magic that there is in the Work—magic which brings changes from within until things that hurt us previously lose their sting; those with which we formerly identified no longer have hold over us, and in the course of time we begin to be on the alert for other energy-producing situations because those that kept us in slavery have no more power over us.

It was thus that I came to learn that I carry my own treasure within me, and that thanks to our Teacher of Dancing, George Ivanitch Gurdjieff, I can try to use it and put it to work. Indeed, where else in the world could I find the wealth with which my personal negative emotions provide me? What else does Life exact from me at every turn of the road except payment in negative emotion of some kind or another? Who is too poor to pay in that coin, no matter how much?

I had not realized previously that we are all potentates, able to draw on an inexhaustible supply of personal negativity; and to draw also for as much as we wish in this direction from an equally inexhaustible stock of unpleasant and undesirable circumstances and people. Now I see that we live in penury, hungering for peace, chilled by envy, hot with anger, livid with jealousy,

truly miserable in Life, blind to the splendor that could be ours if we used our negativity wisely.

I often tell myself that it is just here that I may try to look for the "talents" given to his servants by a certain wise lord of whom the Bible speaks, of whom one hid his talent away fearing his lord's anger, lest he lose it. He did not understand that only he who adds to his inner stature through wise investment of his talents will be the recipient of more gifts, for "to him who hath more is given; and from who hath not, even that he hath is taken away."

No one is free from negative emotions. That we know. All of us are well endowed with them. In this respect everybody starts from the same level; we have all inherited the kingdom that lies within ourselves.

As I understand it, the System tells us there is no special center in man for negative emotions; that emotions are everywhere and nowhere simultaneously and they become negative, but there is nothing in themselves to make them so. Yet we know from sad experience that there is negativity in us. Perhaps it may be said in System terms that we are dealing with a certain "hydrogen" which, on being released into the blood stream by a shock of external or internal origin, goes afire and emits fumes which we classify as anger, fear, despondency, envy, jealousy, hatred, and so on. These are the very emotions which subsequently become profligate and we know their offspring as irritation, annoyance, boredom, anxiety, blues, cruelty, and so forth.

However, the energy stored up in these emotions is the same kind of energy which, coming into contact with other elements also present in us, turn as if by magic into awe, intuition, fortitude, awareness, understanding, compassion, and so on. It cannot be said that these latter are positive emotions, of course. Many persons resent it when they hear the statement, made in the Work, that "man has no positive emotions." They always point out those just mentioned, in themselves and in others, and ask why it is not possible to consider them positive.

Actually, in classifying them, one might say that the feeling of awe, of compassion, of gratitude, et cetera, is a positive feeling—in the sense of its being a desirable feeling. But it cannot be said that it is positive emotion because it does not manifest permanently and can turn into negative emotion when one least

expects it. And inasmuch as it is not permanent, and it may become its opposite in the twinkling of an eye, it is not at all positive emotion. This no one can doubt.

* * *

One day at a group meeting I was asked for the first time where my tensions were, or rather where I felt them. Everyone had spoken of the place where he felt his tensions most. As for myself, I said blandly, "I don't have any."

I can still recall the look of annoyed surprise that came over Mr. Nyland's face. He was my very wise, kind leader at the time. I too was surprised to see him show annoyance. This time I found no excuse for thinking that he was just "trying to look" annoyed, to "work on himself." I knew he was annoyed. However, I was very honest in my belief that I had no tensions; for we had never worked with these, and I had given no thought to tensions nor had I felt the need to try to locate them.

Now, as I saw Mr. Nyland's annoyance and heard everyone speaking of his tensions, I too began trying to sense, to look for tensions in different parts of my body. Before long I found plenty of them, and I was amazed to see that they had gone unnoticed all these years.

So far as our group was concerned, Mr. Ouspensky never had us do any special work observing our tensions. I recall that one Sunday, while lunching at Mendham, Madam had someone on the carpet, lashing her verbally, to awaken in her the desire to use her tensions to work on herself. I did not understand her, but I said I should like to know where my tensions were.

"It is not your problem," Madam answered me.

Not having felt at any time that it was I just assumed that I was free from tensions, until the fatal day when I annoyed dear Mr. Nyland, my leader of the post-Ouspensky period, with my flat statement concerning my freedom from tensions.

On that occasion, memorable for me, Mr. Nyland gave us all, as a group, the task of trying to observe where our tensions were during the following week merely "observing" so as to know at any given moment where to find them just by sensing them. We were to try to discover the postures, attitudes, or reactions that they accompanied, and to try to relax them the moment they

were found. It was a revelation to me to find tensions in the muscles of my face; in fact all over me.

Now I understood far better the absolute necessity of working with the body at the same time that one works with the mind and the emotions. Moreover, I soon discovered that different emotions evoked different tensions in me; that is, tensions in different parts of my body. To find them, to get to know my personal repertoire of tensions and to know—at least theoretically in the beginning—where to locate a tense muscle in order to endeavor to relax it and to avoid becoming lost in a cloud of irritability or despondency or something worse, became a source of great interest for me. It kept me busy working on myself. And since each individual has his own set of tensions, and the same emotion does not bring about equal tension responses in everyone, the hunt assumed a personal aspect that was most fruitful and extremely revealing.

To a certain extent I found that this practice helped me in obtaining some degree of obedience from my body also. I had never given much thought to the body, how it must be used and trained and given tasks to do. It was not until I came into the active phase of work on my being that I had occasion to realize the importance it plays in acquiring self-control and discipline.

We were familiar at the time with Mr. Gurdjieff's words to the effect that "man must die whole." These words now became most interesting to me. I understood them to mean that most people live listlessly and die likewise, so that when the momentous hour to depart from this world arrives some have already been physically dead for years, others have been dead emotionally for a long time, and still others have lost their mental faculties long before death comes. This he called dying by thirds; and he had spoken of the undesirability of such a thing happening to anyone because—this is as I understand it—the essence of the man who did not die whole could not withstand the shock of death, he could not die "consciously."

Inasmuch as in our Work Consciousness plays the role of greatest importance it is most desirable that we be present to the greatest extent possible when death comes. Our aim requires it. If we die whole, and not in thirds, then every center will help. When our emotions are dead, or the mind is gone, or the body no

longer responds to our will, to that extent we are limited from being with ourselves at our last hour. Therefore we cannot die "alive" to our passing: and our second death, which, according to our System occurs when the emotional body's time to leave the planet has also arrived—somewhere around forty days or so following our natural death—is unfavorably affected through our inability fully to appreciate the glory of the event and to make a supreme "whole effort" to remember to be as awake to death as a dying man can be awake, and to wish with our last breath to repay our Father Creator for everything with which He blessed us in life.

The Work makes death beautiful; it certainly robs it of its sting. For there are as many different ways of dying as there are numbers of men, and through the life-struggle to have a change in being we might be blessed at our last moments and close our eyes on a slightly higher plane!

CHAPTER 9

I recall my dismay, as well as that of others who worked in my group, when a good day came after Mr. Gurdjieff's death and we realized that we were not learning any "new" ideas; that all the new ideas we had heard when we first met Mr. Ouspensky kept on being repeated, and that we had heard all that was to be heard. This upset us. We were restless. Some asked, "What now? Can we go no further, will there be no more teachers now that they are gone?"

Around this time we faced the unbearable moment when our choice little group—until now formed by "advanced" people as we fancied ourselves to be—began to grow through the absorption of newcomers, some of whom were not only unfamiliar with the Work itself but equally ignorant (so we thought) of other ideas that might have a remote relation to it. Still worse, the newcomers began to be younger and younger. It was hard to take. After all the work that we had done, why would we have to start from the very beginning, to listen to apparent absurdities, to repeat the abc's and, worst of all, to be brought down to the same level of those who were only just now becoming acquainted with the Work?

I know from personal experience that this feeling is very prevalent at a certain stage in the Work, and it can grow to dangerous proportions if inner talking is allowed to proceed without honest self-observation. At this crucial period in our personal work we must try to practice all the things we have heard, all we have presumably learned. This is the moment when we must work.

We are told to "put the Work between Life and Yourself." At this point we can begin to try. This is a real test for us; it comes upon us like a thief in the night, without warning. And, at times, it turns out to be one of those famous "barriers" that many find it hard to overcome and which spell the end for them so far as the Work is concerned.

When these cloudy days came for those of us who remained

from my original group we tried to be patient, to follow our trusted leader, to weigh the value of personal discipline. We began by listening perseveringly to what we thought was pure balderdash when we heard young ones discuss problems which, so far as we were concerned then, we thought were child's play.

Such was our mental attitude. And then it began to dawn on us, thanks to our efforts to continue attending the meetings devotedly and trying conscientiously to do the "childish" work on which we were now receiving instruction—all for the sake of the Work—that we were trying "to do" of our own volition, since nobody sought in any way to influence us to remain in the group and we were free to come or go at will.

After some time we made still another effort. We began to take part in group discussions, contributing our own working experience. And we found out the appalling extent of our ignorance of ourselves, how little we had observed, how little we had worked on ourselves, how the "ideas" that we had learned intellectually, much as they might have affected us, had but prepared the soil in which the seed of our wish "to be" could grow. We realized also that although the soil might be rich, it was not sufficiently fertilized. It was improperly irrigated, many weeds grew on it, there was too much shade, and we needed a tremendous amount of work and a great deal of sunlight to prepare it.

Around this time, when we began thus to work on Being, I first realized the value of observing oneself impartially. I began struggling against my utter inability to admit the possibility of advancing through inactivity, to understand the intense activity of inactivity, and emotionally to accept the seniority leadership of those who knew through their own experience how to lead others out of the labyrinth in which they might easily become lost.

I was not alone in the group to find it necessary to struggle against the feeling of disappointment that pervaded me when I became cognizant of my inability to convey my understanding, my love of the Work ideas, to all newcomers, and to other would-be newcomers interested in the Work. They asked many questions—the same questions which we ourselves had asked much before them; the questions about things which we thought we knew and understood so well. And now that we were faced

with their questions we felt the impact of our idiocy; we knew that we did not know. It was a challenge to answer so as not to quench their awakening enthusiasm, but in a way so as not to lie, because lies destroy memory in essence, Mr. Ouspensky had told us, adding that the worst lying is that in which we talk "of things we do not know as though we knew."

Those of us who were in this predicament welcomed the opportunity to answer questions as they arose. At least we thought that we would not be "wasting our time" altogether, as it helped us to give from what we had received; for had we not been told by Mr. Ouspensky that, in order to advance a step in the ladder of knowledge in our Work, we had to leave another person in our place?

Slowly the process began. Younger people in attendance and in years gathered around us, giving, in their eagerness, more value to our words than they actually had. This caused us to feel that we were working for the Work; furthering the cause, so to speak; keeping the fire burning on the altar. We felt that we were the vestals called upon to keep this fire going, deluding ourselves into believing that because we were fanning it we understood what the fire was, the purposes that it served, everything about it, about others and about ourselves!

As time went on, some of us began to see identification wriggling like a serpent in the midst of our activity; imagination hovering like a hawk, in readiness to fall upon the tiny germ of our embryo of presence in order to devour it. It was a moment of shock. This realization entailed a long trail of renewed struggles against sleep and passivity, against misunderstanding of the Work and false personality, and the temptation to return to one's original slumber. It was a prolonged siege against negative emotions, against the desire to leave the Work, against the desire to continue to try to be understanding and charitable, against the tendency to put on the semblance of authority that is indeed gained thanks to the shadow of presence and appearance of purpose that one gains, against the multiple worms that crawl within oneself to make one the complacent idiot that one is.

I remember thinking a great deal of Mr. Gurdjieff and his ritual involving the toasting of idiots. I recalled that I had classified myself with the "compassionate" ones, and now I realized that I really belonged with the "zigzagging" idiots—with

those who occasionally forget that they are idiots. The shock was much greater now. Each shock grows stronger as time goes by, and it becomes increasingly difficult to throw off the effect of these illuminating and devastating blows to one's subtly hidden vanity and pride!

But the Work is not served in vain. In my case, it pushed against me from all sides: It exposed sham, neutralized fear and despondency, false emotions, wrong ideas, resulting from this phase of my efforts. And again I started, refreshed, striving to conquer the wilderness in myself.

There was a rebound—other steps had to be taken, work had to go on with people from all sides: Those who led, those who were regressing, those who walked ahead, those who worked side by side with me or lagged behind, those who were left back, those who would impede one's progress.

And the struggle against constant sleep was renewed. Only this time I felt a little stronger. I could see a little more of the very low plateau that I had reached and had begun to leave behind.

CHAPTER 10

There are persons who ask me, at times, "According to your experience, would you say that the manner in which the Work is now taught abroad and in the United States to us differs a great deal from the way in which Mr. Gurdjieff and Mr. Ouspensky taught it?"

But how, indeed, could the Work proceed exactly as it did with Mr. Gurdjieff or Mr. Ouspensky? It is another way of asking whether any so-called "pupils of the first rank" were left by these men to take their place. Yet the answer is simple, as I see it.

I must revert to the diagram of the Ray of Creation. I feel that it embodies my answer:

Since we were told that the diagrams given us are true at all levels and explain everything, let us say that Mr. Gurdjieff represents for us the Sun Absolute on the level of our Work. He brought the System to us, its first and most ardent exponent. It was he who tilled the soil and, in a sense, created other luminaries through his personal teaching; for instance, Mr. Ouspensky. In relation to Mr. Gurdjieff, Mr. Ouspensky, Madam Ouspensky, Mr. and Madame de Salzman, the de Hartmans, Orage, and possibly others became All Worlds like our Island Universes on the Cosmic Scale. In fact it was through the devoted labors of these people that his ideas, his music, his method of teaching, his movements have reached and enriched us all.

They were his World Number 3. But they were not Mr. Gurdjieff. Each one of them had to add "something" of his own to help offset the limitations under which he harbored, to breach the gap separating him from the fountainhead of their strength and knowledge—at the same time endeavoring to maintain everything intact to ensure the passing of vibrations to the lower worlds that would eventually be created through them.

At their death, Mr. Ouspensky and Mr. Orage in turn made room for others who arose to gather for themselves the strength and the knowledge that they had set loose; these others became stars, like All Suns, in the new galaxies that form the World Number 6 of our particular Work Ray. They are the very persons

thoughtlessly called "debutantes" by a disappointed few whose aptitudes do not entitle them to certificates of achievement in the Work.

Thus these new leaders had to evolve a few laws of their own to be added to those deriving from our Work Sun Absolute and from his All Worlds, who created them. In this manner vibrations gathered energy to proceed.

One may foresee that eventually we will have Work Worlds Number 12 and Number 24; also Work Worlds Number 48 and Number 96, and that, having reached the nethermost end of the Work Ray in "another 300 years or so," there will be many new laws added to those of the Group that fed from the Original Source. In this manner the pure original ideas will become like buried or hidden treasure—to be rediscovered when some other great magician of Mr. Gurdjieff's ilk appears on the scene further to interpret the Work concepts of World Creation and of World Maintenance.

Our Work, which is so logical, must be consecutive; therefore it must follow the pattern given in its own symbolic cosmology. For this reason, they who cast stones at the sincere efforts made by the so-called "debutantes" show in so doing their own inability to assimilate ideas of real import—their inability to work because they cannot think "otherwise."

However, perhaps it is proper that some persons should so act in this respect. We must remember that the Work is a Body. As such, it must eliminate. Those who leave it and throw stones at it play their role as efficiently as do the others who remain in the Work to become its blood, its sinews, bones, et al. Possibly it is because quitters realize the role they have chosen to play, that resentment swells within them, and they occasionally spit venom upon others who, by understanding "otherwise," try to see beyond appearances, making an effort "to be" and to save the Work from destruction by the merciless passing of Time.

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There is order in All and Everything.

"There will come a time," Mr. Ouspensky said to me one day, "when you will understand many things that you have heard in a different way, and you will know then that you have been growing."

In Group we had just been talking about "Chief Feature." He had told us that it was not easy to find it; that a man must observe himself impartially over a long period of time, to see himself from all sides; and that no one could tell another what his chief feature was because one had to see it by oneself to believe it.

This is what he said always. Yet, on this particular occasion, I must have done something very stupid and he appeared to be very angry with me. He told me, "You are always inventing things. Yes, inventing things. That is your chief feature."

This came after a volley of uncalled for abuse for which, of course, I loved him at the moment because I always had the impression that he was acting his anger and he never failed to amuse me when he showed it, much as I respected him. I bless him today for all those apparent injustices that taxed my understanding. What other occasion would I have ever had to learn how to bear patiently and to try to understand "otherwise" if he had not baffled me?

In any event, this particular time, when he was through scolding me, he added, "Now you are luckier than most people. You know what most people spend years trying to find out. Use it."

It is evident that I was not quite ready to receive this gift or I should not have proceeded to forget his words, since I must confess that the episode passed into oblivion right then and there. Other things which seemed to me to be more important, at the moment, swept his words out of my memory altogether.

Mr. Ouspensky's departure for London came unexpectedly to me, just a few days after the incident of which I am speaking, and this splendid boon he freely gave me would have been completely lost to me had it not been my custom at the time mechanically to keep a record of everything I understood him to say at each lecture or reading as well as of every experience that I had either with him, with Madam, or with other persons in the Group. The "I" in me that wrote notes did not let his words go unnoticed; but having written them out, it had to give way to other "I's" that came in succession and knew nothing about it. None of these "I's" valued them.

Time passed. Mr. Ouspensky died. Mr. Gurdjieff arrived, bringing with him purpose, activity, and light so dazzling that everything else took second place. When he left again for Paris

he had already consolidated the groups, which were now organized to carry on his Work that it might be kept alive and growing.

I worked with one of these groups. Before long, the Chief Feature question came to the fore. But the answer was always the same, "You must find it out yourself through impartial observation."

I, too, began to wonder about my Chief Feature without once recalling my notes or the incident that had prompted Mr. Ouspensky's words.

Then came Mr. Gurdjieff's death.

Our work continued. Still more years went by. These were years of very hard work, of efforts to work on myself, efforts to understand, efforts to observe myself impartially, to find out the direction in which my Chief Feature would likely lay, since Mr. Gurdjieff had said that "man's work begins when his struggle with his Chief Feature starts."

And all along I had Mr. Ouspensky's statement filed away among my old papers, altogether forgotten. How true were Mr. Gurdjieff's words that we do not value what is freely given to us!

It will not be difficult, therefore, to imagine my feelings, when, in looking over some old papers, I chanced to come upon the notebook where I had recorded Mr. Ouspensky's words and the entire incident that had prompted them. It all came back very clearly. But now his statement shocked me. Why did he say that? I wondered. It makes no sense. This is not true of me. Why should he say it, I wonder?

I tried to recall the incident. I remembered also how, while he spoke at the time, I had kept busy talking to myself, saying to me that I must accept the scolding because no doubt he wanted to test me; no doubt he wanted to see if I would react negatively, to give me an opportunity to try to refrain from expressing negative emotion since—how evident it was to me then!—everything that he was saying was far removed from the truth.

I relived that old moment intensely. I felt the struggle I had faced with myself, my rebellion at his injustice by feeling that he should have known very well that I not only did not invent things but even tried not to see or hear anything that did not concern me. And the struggle went on within me certainly he was helping me to work on myself, it couldn't be otherwise. I must love him for it; indeed I loved him for it. And so on.

Now, in retrospect, I saw myself clearly, "inventing" in my sleep while he spoke, therefore unable to grasp the gem that was being given me!

At present, I was working on a group project, busy thinking about this and that, trying to "invent" things to do and ways to get things done. Suddenly I saw now that this was really I. I, inventing! I had taken "inventing" to mean only lying. Inventing is what he had said. Inventing is what I was engaged in now.

How differently I understood it all at this moment! I realized from a tumult of memories that I had heard him on a very ordinary level, that for this reason I had not valued his words. He had annoyed me because I was convinced that I never lied—not to him, at any event; and I resented his words when he said that I "invented" things.

And here I was, years later, "inventing" what to do and how to do it. "Inventing" whenever circumstances have challenged me, or for any number of reasons, always saying to myself and to others: "Let us do this, shall we do that?" Was this that? Or was that this? How, indeed, could I struggle against this, which was my very self? How unfortunate that I had seen it so late, when Mr. Ouspensky was gone from my experience!

And then it happened.

I cannot put into words the feeling that came over me. I saw so much, so rapidly; I lived the moment so intensely that it was a real milestone in my personal work on myself.

I saw my Chief Feature as a medal, its sides advantageous or harmful, useful or useless, desirable or undesirable, depending upon which one of them I flipped. This explained contradictions in myself, and opposites too, and buffers! And I realized that chief feature is "I", that only when I sacrifice ME may the obverse and reverse sides of the medal that represents my essence unite validly to make me one, whole. Yes, I must work on myself, chief feature must weaken, until through chief feature itself I gain the very thing that I have sacrificed. Chief feature must yield its treasure and give way to Itself, Otherwise.

The discovery was a shock to me. It gave me a great lift, and the feeling of a new beginning. And the Work expanded, it grew, becoming more flexible as it became more sound. Now I felt that I had an inkling of the direction that I must follow to try better to observe myself.

It was not until this moment came, and with it the realization that all my efforts to work on myself throughout the years that had gone by were simply movements made still in comfortable sleep that I saw my distance from the Path and understood Mr. Ouspensky's words that "Our Work is not the Path. The Path is very far away for us."

To think that he gave me so much, and I ignored it—until mere chance brought it back to my notice!

Mr. Ouspensky was right. Sometimes we are ready too late!

. . .

According to the Work, lying destroys memory. Thus it starves essence, almost kills it outright. Mr. Ouspensky repeatedly reminded us that our whole struggle in the Work is a struggle against lying, since for us to lie is not only the rather simple fact of telling something that is not exactly so. It is much more subtle than that, something intrinsically wrong with our human machine due to which we "speak and even think of things concerning which we know nothing as though we knew." In this way we seek to impress others as well as ourselves with our importance and our False Personality flourishes.

Of course, I do not wish to lie; yet I realize that even in these pages that I am writing I may quite possibly be guilty of it. I thought it over, and decided to carry through—trying to remember all along that I may well be lying, trying to observe my special brand of lying, and to become acquainted with phases of my False Personality heretofore unobserved.

This thought came to me in answer to a question that was put to me—questions always provide a wealth of inspiration to me in this respect—namely, "How are you so sure that Mr. Gurdjieff was not a devil at one time, as he is said to have been by others who possibly knew him much better than you did? When you state that they write about him subjectively, how do you account for your own recounting of his doings, and of his sayings, and for your interpretation of what he did or did not do. Isn't this subjective also, and thereby just as false?"

Of course it is subjective. And what else could it well be? Who, among us, can produce a truly objective, conscious work? Certainly I speak subjectively, just the same as everybody else,

pro or against Mr. Gurdjieff. Yet there is a slight difference. In my case I avow that I do not know. I admit that Mr. Gurdjieff may have had his satanic sides, and anyone who knew these phases of his personality is fully entitled to speak about them. I object to their tirades only insofar as they aim to show that this alone was true of the great old man, as is the case with most of the things that are hurled against him. These accounts are not only subjective; they are also offered to lead us into believing that the hideousness which they report is the gospel truth about Mr. Gurdjieff. This is true to such an extent that people who never saw him carry tales about him that would, in past ages, have sufficed to make him burn as a witch.

For this reason I feel that if such detrimental and prejudiced subjective accounts about Mr. Gurdjieff and his Work are abroad circulating widely, it is quite permissible for the subjective account of my own very personal experience, through events that took place in my life through having met him and Mr. Ouspensky, be brought to light. I too am writing as I feel—for how else can a man judge another except by what is hidden within his own heart—as I understand the various facts that came to my notice.

This is especially true of my speculations about Mr. Gurdjieff's relationship with his pupils, about his reasons for doing this, that, or the other, and the manner in which I chose to interpret it all. I repeat: These are my interpretations; for in our Work we all know that no one can tell assuredly what goes on in another man's consciousness unless he be on a higher rung of the ladder of being, which certainly cannot be said to be the case of anyone of us who came in contact with Mr. Gurdjieff. My interpretations are meant for those who take interest in our Work, favorably or otherwise. Let them know that I am lying according to our understanding; let them read and come to whatever conclusions they wish on the basis of their own inner content and common sense.

However, as regards the few things concerning the Work itself which I believe I have heard or remembered, they are as I honestly understood them, and what I repeat is what I believe I know about them for myself. Therefore I speak of them as being mine; to them I have added nothing, nor have I sub-

tracted anything from them. I give what I believe I received, and the words at least are as exact for each statement as my interpretation of them is personal.

In my narrative I have endeavored to remain awake to the fact that to meet the conditions of the Work it must be written for profit: My own profit, Mr. Gurdjieff's profit, and the profit of the Work itself as now represented by our groups. I feel that I have met these conditions.

My profit cannot be doubted. I have made an effort to follow my dying teacher's injunction to "reconstruct" my own personal understanding of the extraordinary, luminous adventure on which I embarked on a day lucky for me. I am examining that which is mine from the Work without benefit of notes or books, that which I will have with me to take along when the "line of development" that is my life reaches the shore opposite to the shore of my birth.

I feel that the light kindled within me by the Grace of God through my personal "Search for the Miraculous" under Mr. Ouspensky and Mr. Gurdjieff, with the bounteous help I have received from Madam Ouspensky, Madame de Salzman, Jesmine Howarth, my incomparable Movements' teacher, and our outstandingly gifted, generous and capable leader Mr. Nyland, source of constant inspiration for me, burns so intensely, so deeply in my essence-being that it may well "withstand the shock of death" as I understand death for myself.

In taking this inventory of my understanding of System ideas and of my personal work experience, I myself profit. It is my Confirmation, my freely confessed gratitude toward the System into which I went out of sheer curiosity in sound and total stupor to find in it a treasure beyond my wildest dreams.

As regards the profit from my narrative to "Monsieur Gurdjieff, the real, the only Mister Gurdjieff, Teacher of Dancing, Tiger of Turkestan, Nephew of Prince Mukransky," Devil, Magician, or whatever others may call him, it will serve to remind all of the wisdom of his words concerning "Man in quotation marks": "Each one has his own comprehension according to the associations which cause him to mentate and which arise from whatever happened around him during his period of preparation to become a responsible being."

For, as Mullah Nassr Eddin so wisely said, "every stick has

two ends," and each person will hold the end that suits him best: That which is held by those who write malevolently about Mr. Gurdjieff and his Work, and the end which I hold, since while traveling in his cortege they found subjective torture and despondency where I found exactly the opposite—richness, benignity; and bounty! I feel this will be to his profit.

From this it may well follow that all who came into contact with Mr. Gurdjieff, those of us who belong in his family, so to speak, as well as the critics who met and who did not meet him, those who have deserted, his slanderers and what not; those who come following on our footsteps, everyone, will necessarily ponder whether to accept or to refute, whether to keep or let go this or that end of the stick. There may be friction between "yes and no" which is always beneficial to all. Herein lies the Work's profit, since it may deepen their interest in the unique, sagacious System that we have come to call our own. The struggle between "yes and no" is beneficial to the General Aim of the Work.

In the absence of another subjective book to depict the beneficial and profoundly favorable influence exerted by Monsieur Gurdjieff on some of his so-called "disciples"—if I may call myself such—there would be no material for this struggle to take place. Things would remain onesided, unjustly hiding in the shadows the light that the proud were unable to reflect.

The thought of the existence of an "inner circle" of humanity is, for me, the priceless clasp of my starry chain of ideas received from Mr. Gurdjieff through my teacher Mr. Ouspensky. Toward this "inner circle" formed by men number 5, number 6, number 7, living in the innermost circle that forms the core of conscious humanity, my aspirations reach. From it streams energy in the form of conscious influences; it is like a double circulation of sustaining blood. My Work efforts slowly grow.

I strive to become man number 4, wishing successfully to navigate the hairbreadth of the bridge that spans the abyss leading from one shore of myself to the other. And thus I sit between two stools, the most precarious of positions, wondering whether perhaps Mr. Gurdjieff had those of us in my predicament in mind when he said:

"Blessed is he who has a soul, happy is he who has no soul. But woe, sadness, and affliction is the lot of him in whom the soul is in the process of being born."

When Mr. Ouspensky told my group about the men who form the "inner circle of humanity," our first question was, "Why don't the men from the inner circle help the rest of humanity, why is ordinary man left alone to find or to lose his way?"

"But what means help?" he parried.

His tossing aside of the question gave direction to my thinking on the subject, and it soon became clear to me that help is given us constantly through the scattering of seeds that turn into "B" influences, having been "C" influences at their inception. These are the very seeds through which our Magnetic Center forms, to bring us back to their source when we make our own efforts to move on.

And there are men who appear in our midst like a flash of lightning, and who abide among us for a spell to show us the way that they have traveled and will retravel for our benefit when we join their caravan of our own accord. Their voices can be heard throughout the ages—saints, rishis, gurus, great teachers—keeping unbroken the call to witness the general harmony of the Whole, the steady flow onward of all humanity from the single source of each man who dares to struggle with himself and seeks to become Man as God made him, in His likeness and semblance.

Sonorously, from among these voices it was my good fortune to hear that of Mr. Gurdjieff as I crossed his path—the voice of the very man who is accused by many of having been a devil.

To me, his voice came as the voice of the nightingale in the fairytale of old, which awakened the sleeper and dispelled the shadows that threatened destruction and the mechanicality that spelled false values. It brought sunlight and joy in the freedom of its song; the call to awaken to the understanding and to the objective love of God's universe and of His creatures, through the struggle with myself.

I am glad that I met Mr. Gurdjieff toward the end of his journey. And to those who would question the purity of his noble Work by speculating on the apparently dark sides of a personality with which, as is true of us all, he may have had to contend when his own struggle started, I will say that his greatness lies in having overcome sleep. He, too, had the right to engage in the conquest of self and to seek that which he succeeded in finding and later shared so lavishly with us. His memory shall live and shine in the light that he instilled by dint of good will deep into

the essence of his flock, the sheep that he fleeced, cudged, sheared, led, fed, and turned into "alarm clocks" that would not not fall simultaneously and too comfortably asleep when his Shepherd's crook could be seen no longer.

Thus in loving gratitude to the "Magician" who left his sheep safely in one flock—Jews, Christians, Moslems, Buddhists, et al—"because religion is conscience, and man cannot change his religion"—I bring my memories to an end "Otherwise," namely, with the sacred invocation that opened everything that he said, wrote or did:

"In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

And with these sacred words the prayer of my heart for his pupil, my teacher, Pyotr Demianovitch Ouspensky, and for himself, our Master, George Ivanitch Gurdjieff, softly ends murmuring,

*et lux perpetua luceat ei . . .
requiescat in pace*

Amin!

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GURDJIEFF

his work on myself... with others... for the work

It may be noted that the author, in reporting the words of Mr. Gurdjieff, Mr. Ouspensky and Madam Ouspensky, has in many cases not used grammatically correct English. Phrases such as "You not know" and "What means this?" are to be found throughout the book. For those who question this fact, it should be understood that such phrases are recorded here exactly as they were spoken. Both Mr. Gurdjieff and the Ouspenskys spoke English in an abbreviated form, using few words to convey a wealth of meaning.

The value of this book lies just in the fact that it is based on verbatim reporting of meetings with both great men, and "Madam" in visits to Mendham. The author has not added any words of her own nor attempted to change the style in which they were spoken. The importance of such verbatim note-taking is that the ideas recorded are not colored by the personal and subjective feelings and understanding of the reporter. In addition, the notes taken of Mr. Ouspensky's meetings were frequently checked for accuracy by Mr. Ouspensky himself.

This book was originally written as a task in which the author's personal experiences of the Work were to be set down entirely from her own notes taken at the time. The task specified that no books of any kind were to be consulted for verification of the Work ideas, the solar system, or anything else. The conditions were met.

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